Slavery

Islamic and Christian Perspectives

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From Islamic and Christian Perspectives

by
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Prefaces

Publisher's Preface to the First Edition

Slavery is one of the oldest evils of society which defied the attempts of reformers for so many centuries. Ancient civilisations could not eradicate slavery, so they compromised with it. Some of these civilisations even patronised slavery. The Christian churches participated in slave-trade. Their priests blessed the ships carrying human cargo and admonished the slaves to be obedient, but never urged the masters to be kind. As late as 1970, Roman Catholics purchased 1500 Indian girls because European girls did not like to live as nuns. Among all the religions it was only Islam that attacked the very foundations of this evil. But it is the irony of the history that the people who nourished slavery, supported it, and derived benefit from it, later became champions of its abolition.

'Allamah Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, the Chief Missionary of Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania has very ably and painstakingly written this book. Like a research scholar that he is, he has objectively treated the theme of this book. He has marshalled fact after fact from history; quoted from the Holy Qur'an, the traditions, and contemporary writers on the subject; and cited Islamic and ancient laws. He has clearly and vividly shown that Western civilisation is not so great a champion of emancipation of slaves as it poses to be. In fact this book will prove to he an eye-opener for those who blindly nod in approval to the propaganda about Western humanism.

Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust proudly presents this volume to the readers and hopes that it will gain approval of the public.

Trustees,

Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust Karachi, Pakistan

15 Jamadi I, 1392

27 June, 1972

Author's Preface To The Second Edition

This book was written on the request of late Haji Hasanali P. Ebrahim, who published it from Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, Karachi, in 1972. It went out of stock very soon, but the demand continues. Responding to that demand, my son, Hujjatul Islam Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi has now prepared this second edition.

Some minor changes have been made in chapters' arrangement; paragraphs have been added here and there; and my son has prepared the foot-notes which has enhanced the academic value of the book. May Allah grant him long life and strength him to serve the cause of true Islam with sincerity.

I am also thankful to all the friends who have contributed in any way to this publication.

S. S. A. Rizvi

Gopalpur (India)

28 November, 1987.

Slavery in Ancient Times

"O you men!

We have created you of a male and a female, and then We made you (into different) races and tribes so that you may know each other.

Surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one who is most pious among you;

surely Allah Is All-Knowing & Aware."
(The Qur'an 49:13)

Slavery was not an institution invented by Christianity or Islam. It was there long before these religions came into being. Just to give a glimpse of ancient slavery, let me quote from Justice Ameer Ali:

> The practice of slavery is coeval with human existence. Historically its traces are visible in every age and in every nation...The Jews, the Greeks, the Romans and the ancient Germans, people whose legal and social institutions have most affected modern manners and customs, recognised and practised both kinds of slavery, praedial servitude as well as household slavery. With establishment of the Western and Northern barbarians on the ruins of the Roman empire, besides personal slavery, territorial servitude, scarcely known to the Romans, became general in all the newly settled countries...The barbaric codes, like the Roman, regarded slavery as an ordinary condition of mankind; and if any protection was afforded the slave, it was chiefly as the property of his master, who alone, besides the State, had the power of the life and death over him.[1]

In Persia the palace of the Emperor had twelve thousand women slaves. When the Byzantine Emperor sat on the throne, thousands of slaves remained in attendance with full attention and hundreds of them bowed when he bent to put on his shoes. In Greece, the number of slaves was far greater than the number of free men, although Greece had produced great advocates of humanity and justice. Every Greek army which entered with ridings of victory over the

enemy was followed by a host of slaves. Aristotle, the famous ancient philosopher, while discussing the question whether or not any one is intended by nature to he a slave, says, "There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule." Then he concludes, "...some men are by nature free, and others slave, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right."[2] With Imperial Rome, the slavery of the ancient world reached its zenith, but when Roman Empire began its decline, the lot of slaves began to improve in some tiny degrees. But the canker of slavery was too evident. It had defeated the skill of Roman legality as it had defeated the subtlety of Greek philosophy. To be compassionate with slaves was regarded not as a natural feeling but as a personal idiosyncrasy. The slave was hardly human; he had no right, he had no soul.[3]

At the time of the advent of Islam (in 7th century CE) slavery was rampant throughout India, Persia, Rome, the Arabian Peninsula, Rumania and Greece. The elite and educated class of these countries did not regard the slaves eligible even for the basic human rights. He was regarded as a commodity not worthier than cattle.[4] Often he was sold cheaper than sheep and goat. On special social occasions the distinguished citizens of the State used to get together with the Head of the State to watch the gladiatorial games in which the slaves were made to fight with swords and spears just like the shows of cock-fights and partridges in our old feudal society. The people cheered the hands until one of the fighters was killed. The audience would then applaud the winner heartily.[5]

On the one side, the Arabian Peninsula was surrounded by countries which still bore traces of the grandeur of the then declining Roman-Greek civilisation, and on the other side, by countries wrapped in Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. As mentioned above, in all these countries slavery was a recognised institution. The twelve Tablets had given its official seal of approval to this institution. The unmitigated hardship and cruelty which the slaves were made to suffer had not abated but, if anything, the slaves were now accepted as animals whose fate was only to work and die for those who owned them. I do not intend this book to be a chronicle of the inhumanity which the slaves suffered but suffice it to say that man must forever carry in his conscience a sense of guilt for having once indulged in slavery.

Notes:

[1]. Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam* (London: University Paper-back, 1965), pp. 259-261; also see Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization,* vol. III (New York, 1944), p.397.

[2]. Aristotle, *Politics,* Book I, chp. 5 (New York: Modern Library, 1943), *pp.58-60.*

[3]. Durant, W., *op. cit.,* vol. III, p., 397; vol. IV (New York, 1950), p.29.

[4]. *Ibid.*

[5]. *Ibid.*

Christianity and Slavery

Though slavery was an ancient institution which started in pre-historic era of mankind, it is safe to say that the volume of this trade reached its zenith through the Christian nations of Europe and America who, as is their nature, turned it into a meticulously organised commerce and started capturing slaves by thousands. Before we describe the nefarious trade in slave started by the Portuguese, the Spaniards and other maritime powers of the Christian West for their newly acquired colonies, let us see if Christianity, as a system and as a creed, did anything in the earliest period to alleviate the lot of slaves.

Justice Ameer Ali writes about Christianity:

> It found slavery a recognised institution of the empire; it adopted the system without any endeavour to mitigate its baneful character, or promise its gradual abolition, or to improve the status of slaves. Under the civil law, slaves were mere chattels. They remained so under the Christian domination. Slavery had flourished among the Romans from the earliest times. The slaves whether of native or foreign birth, whether acquired by war or purchase, were regarded simply as chattels. Their masters possessed the power of life and death over them.. Christianity had failed utterly in abolishing slavery or alleviating its evil. [6]

Will Durant describes the position of the Church as follows:

> The Church did not condemn slavery. Orthodox and heretic, Roman and barbarian alike assumed the institution to he natural and in-destructible. Pagan laws condemned to slavery any free woman who married a slave; the laws of Constantine [a Christian emperor] ordered the woman to be executed, and the slave to be burned alive. The Emperor Gratian decreed that a slave who accused his master of any offence except high treason to the state should be burned alive at once, without inquiring into the justice of the charge.[7]

The only redress prescribed by Christianity is seen in the letter of St. Paul to a certain Philemon sending back to him his slave, Onessimus, with a recommendation to treat him

well. Nothing more. It is interesting to note that the word "slave" of original Hebrew has been changed to "servant" in the Authorised Version of the Bible, and to "bond servant" in the Revised Standard Version, because, in words of The *Concise Bible Commentary*, "this word [i. e., slave] is avoided because of its association.[8] One wonders whether a translator has a right to change the original just because of "associations"?

It would be of interest to note here that the word "slave" is of European origin. It came into existence when the Franks used to supply the Spanish slave market with the "barbarians," and those captives happened to be mostly the people of Turkish origin from the region known as Slovakia (now a part of Czechoslovakia). These people are called "Slav" and so all captives came to be known as "slaves".

The following quotation graphically shows the attitude of Islam and Christianity on the subject of slavery and race:

> "Take away the black man! I can have no discussion with him," exclaimed the Christian Archbishop Cyrus when the Arab conquerors had sent a deputation of their ablest men to discuss terms of surrender of the capital of Egypt, headed by Negro 'Ubaydah as the ablest of them all. To the sacred Archbishop's astonishment, he was told that this man was commissioned by General 'Amr; that the Moslems held Negroes and white men in equal respect judging a man by his character and not by his colour.[9]

This episode gives you in a nutshell what I propose to explain at length in this booklet.

Notes:

[6]. Ameer Ali, *op. cit.,* pp.260-261.

[7]. Lecky, W.E., *History of European Morals,* vol.II (New York, 1926), p.61, as quoted by Will Durant, *op. cit.,* vol. IV, p.77.

[8]. Clarke, Rev. W.K.L., *The Concise Bible Commentary* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), p.976.

[9]. Leeder, S.S., *Veiled Mysteries of Egypt* (London, 1912), p.332.

Islam Attacks Slavery

Islam has often been represented by Christian writers as a religion which not only tolerated slavery but also encouraged it. This is a serious accusation levelled against Islam, and in this book I propose to show its falsity. I would have taken, if possible, the charitable view that the charge against Islam is based on ignorance of facts, but I am grieved to note that in majority of the critics the overflowing motive seems to be prejudice, and malice.

We have mentioned briefly the attitude of Christianity towards slavery, and more will be said afterwards. Here, to begin with, let us have a look at Islam and its codes.

As far as slavery was concerned, Arabs in the pre-Islamic days were as bad offenders as their neighbours. Slaves were a commercial commodity, and slavery was an established institution. It was a source of livelihood for thousands and a source of labour for scores of thousands. To the elite, the number of slaves in the household was a symbol of status.

This was the state of affairs at the advent of Islam. Slavery offended the spirit of Islam as much as idolatry did. But while the latter had its roots in spiritualism and hence could be countered by reason, slavery had its roots in commerce, in social structure, in agriculture undertakings; and reason alone was but a feeble weapon against a foe so insidious and so deeply rooted. How was then slavery to be eradicated?

The ill-informed may well suggest that the Prophet of Islam could have used force. But the ineffectiveness of force for such purpose is well recognised by all dispassionate students of sociology. Force may achieve submission but it inevitably achieves hostility, and very often hostility is so fierce that many a good cause has been lost when force has been employed for its advancement. The sad plight of the Negroes of America is but one illustration of how ineffective the employment of force can be when the object is to achieve a social reform. The emancipation of slaves did not change the attitude of the white masters towards their ex-slaves; and what a bitter legacy of racial antipathy has it left! Toynbee writes, "The Blacks in the United States who were emancipated jurisdically in 1862 are, with good reason, feeling now, more than a century later, that they are still being denied full human rights by the white majority of their fellow-citizens.[1]

Islam's war against slavery aimed at changing the attitude and mentality of the whole society, so that after emancipation, slaves would become its full-fledged members, without any need of demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience and racial riots. And Islam achieved this seemingly impossible objective without any war. To say that Islam waged no war against slavery would not be a true statement. A war it waged, but a war in which neither sword was resorted to, nor blood was spilled.

Islam aimed at striking at the roots of its foe and created allies by arousing the finer instincts of its followers. A three-pronged attack on slavery was launched.

***

Firstly, Islam placed restrictions on acquisition of slaves. Prior to Islam, slavery was practised with abandon. Debtors were made slaves, war captives were either killed or made slaves. In weaker nations, people were hunted like animals, killed or captured and reduced to slavery. Islam, in unambiguous terms, forbade its followers to enslave people on any pretext. The only exception was an idolatrous enemy captured in a war which was fought either in self-defence or with the permission of the Prophet or his rightful successors. This exception was, in words of Ameer Ali, "in order to serve as guarantee for the preservation of the lives of the captives."[2]

As 'Allamah Tabataba'i has described at great length, prior to Islam strong and dominant people, throughout the world, used to enslave weak persons without any restraint. Important among the "causes" of enslavement were the following three factors:

1. War: The conqueror could do with the vanquished enemy whatever he liked. He could put the arrested soldiers to death, condemn them to slavery or otherwise keep them under his authority or clutch.

2. Domination: A chief or ruler could enslave, depending on his sweet wish, anyone residing under his domain.

3. Guardianship: A father or grandfather had absolute authority over his offspring. He could sell or gift him or her away; could lend him or her to someone else, or exchange him or her with another's son or daughter.

When Islam came on the scene, it nullified and negated the last two factors completely. No ruler or progenitor was allowed to treat his subjects or offspring as his slaves. Every individual was bestowed with well-defined rights; the ruler and the ruled, the progenitor and the offspring had to live within the limits prescribed by religion; no one could transgress those limits.

And it drastically restricted the first cause, i.e., war, by allowing enslavement only in a war fought against unbelieving enemy. In no other way could anyone be enslaved. At the same time, Islam raised the status of slavery to that of a free man; and opened many ways for their emancipation.[3]

Before slave trade was started on a large scale by the Westerners (when colonisation began), it was only in wars that men were made captives. But Islam did not permit wars of aggression. All the battles fought during the life-time of the Prophet were defensive battles. Not only this, an alternative was also introduced and enforced: *"to let the captives go free, either with or without any ransom* "(The Qur'an 47:4). In the battles forced upon the Muslims, the Prophet had ordered very humane treatment of the prisoners who fell into Muslim hands. They could purchase their freedom on payment of small sums of money, and some of them were left off without any payment. It all depended upon the discretion of the Prophet or his rightful successors, keeping in view the safety of the Muslims and the extent of danger from the enemy. The captives of the very first Islamic battle, Badr, were freed on ransom (in form of money or work like teaching ten Muslim children how to read and write), while those of the tribe of Tay were freed without any ransom.[4]

Even in such enslavement a condition was attached that a mother was not to be separated from her child, nor brother from brother nor husband from wife nor one member of a clan from his clan. The Prophet and the first Shi'ite Imam, 'Ali bin Abi Talib, prescribed severest penalties for anyone who took a free man into slavery: cutting off the hand of the culprit.

Ameer Ali writes in *Mohammedan Law:*

The possession of a slave by the Koranic laws was conditional on a bona-fide war, waged in self-defence, against idolatrous enemies; and it was permitted in order to serve as a guarantee for the preservation of the lives of the captives.. Mohammad found the custom existing among the pagan Arabs; he minimised the evil, and at the same time laid down such strict rules that but for the perversity of his followers, slavery as a social institution would have ceased to exist with the discontinuance of the wars in which the Moslem *[sic]* nation were at first involved.

> The mutilation of the human body was also explicitly forbidden by Mohammad, and the institution which flourished both in the Persian and the Byzantine empires was denounced in severe terms. Slavery by purchase was unknown during the reigns of the first four Caliphs, the *khulafai-rashidin*, 'the legitimate Caliphs' as they are called by the Sunnis. There is, at least, no authentic record of any slave having been acquired by purchase during their tenure of office. But with the accession of the usurping house of Ommeyya *[sic]* a change came over the spirit of Islam. Mu'awiyah was the first Muslim sovereign who introduced into the Mohammedan world the practice of

> acquiring slaves by purchase. He was also the first to adopt the Byzantine custom of guarding his women by eunuchs. During the reign of the early Abbasides the Shi'a Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq preached against slavery, and his views were adopted by the Mu'tazila. Karmath, who flourished in the ninth century of the Christian era ..seems to have held slavery to be unlawful.[5]

Thus we see that the earnest attempt of Islam to stop its followers from acquiring new slaves was foiled by Banu Umayyah. And I must record to the lasting disgrace of a large number of Muslims that, in later times, they utterly ignored the precepts of the Prophet and the injunctions of the Qur'an, and the Arabs too participated with the European Christians in the abominable slave-trade of East Africa. The West African slave-trade was totally in the hands of the European Christians.

***

Secondly, Islam commenced an active campaign to emancipate the slaves. Emancipation of slaves was declared to be expiation for a number of sins. This question is related to canonical laws of Islam, but we shall enumerate a few of them to show how for small sins of commission the penalty imposed was manumission of slaves. For instance, if a man failed to fast without any reasonable excuse during the month of Ramadan, or if he failed to observe fast of *i'tikaf* or vow, etc, he had to free a slave for each day, in addition to fasting afterwards. Similarly, a slave had to be freed for every breach of vow; or for tearing one's garment as a demonstration of grief on the death of a spouse or child; or if a woman beat herself or cut or pulled her hair in grief over the death of anyone; or for accidental homicide and, in some cases, even for intentionally killing a Muslim; or if a husband told his wife that she was to him like his mother, and for many other trespasses.[6] From these instances, some of them trivial but deeply ingrained in Arab culture, one can see how religious laws were enacted for the emancipation of slaves, and the total eradication of the curse of slavery from the society.

It may well be argued that by prescribing emancipation of slaves as penance for sins, Islam envisaged continuance of slavery as a permanent institution. This was not so. For every instance emancipation of a slave was prescribed as a penance, an alternative was also prescribed - clearly indicating that Islam's objective was in time to create a society free from this pernicious institution.[7]

Islam also declared that any slave woman who bore a child by her master could not be sold and, on her master's death, she became automatically a free woman.[8] Moreover; in contrast to all previous customs, Islam ordained that the child born to a slave woman by her master should follow the status of the father.[9] Slaves were given a right to ransom themselves either on payment of an agreed sum or on completion of service for an agreed period. The legal term for this is *mukatabah*. Allah says in the Qur'an:

And those who seek a deed [of liberation] from among those [slaves] whom your right hands possess, give them the writing (kitab) if you know of goodness in them, and give them of the wealth of Allah which He has given you.. (Qur'an 2433)

The word *kitab* in the verse stands for the written contract between the slave and his master known as *"mukatabah* - deed of contract". The significant factor in *mukatabah* is that when a slave desires to get into such a mutual written contract, the master should not refuse it.[10] In the verse quoted above, God has made it incumbent upon Muslims to help the slaves in getting liberated. When a slave wants to get himself freed, the master has not only to agree to it, but he is also directed to help the slave from his own wealth,[11] the only provision being the satisfaction to the effect that the slave would live a respectable life after earning his freedom. Thus, about 1400 years ago Islam dealt in the most effective way a death blow to slavery.

It also directed that the slaves seeking freedom should be helped from the public treasury *(baytul mal*).[12] Thus, as a last resort, the Prophet and his rightful successors were to provide ransom for the slaves out of state coffers. The Qur'an recognises the emancipation of slaves as one of the permissible expenditures of alms and charity. (See the Qur'an 9:60, 2:177.)

It is worth remembering that a slave automatically became free if the master cut his ear or blinded his eye.[13] Also if the slaves, living in an Islamic state, accepted Islam before their masters, then they would become free automatically. If the slave became blind or handicapped he would become free.[14] According to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him), if a slave is Muslim and has worked for seven years then he should be set free. Forcing him to work after seven years is not permissible.[15] It is because of this tradition *(hadith)* that the religious scholars are of the opinion that freeing the slave after seven years is a highly recommended deed of virtue.

In addition to these compulsory ways of emancipation, voluntary emancipation of slaves was declared as the purest form of charity. Imam 'Ali emancipated one thousand slaves, purchasing them from his own money.[16] The same was the number of the slaves emancipated by the seventh Imam Musa al-Kazim. The fourth Imam, 'Ali bin al-Husayn, used to emancipate every slave in his household on the eve of 'Idd (the annual celebration of Muslims). It is important to note that in all the above cases, the freed slaves were provided with sufficient means to earn their livelihood respectably.

Islam is the first and the only religion which has prescribed liberation of slaves as a virtue and a condition of genuine faith in God. No religion other than Islam has ever preached and enjoined how best we can show our love for fellow human beings in bondage. In chapter ninety of the Qur'an, liberating a slave has been prescribed as a cardinal virtue of the faith:

Certainly We have created men [to dwell] in distress. What! Does he think that no one has power over him? He shall say, "I have wasted much wealth" Does he think that no one sees him? Have We not given him two eyes, a tongue and two lips, and We pointed out to him the two conspicuous ways [of good and evil]? But he would not attempt the uphill road. What will make you comprehend what the uphill road is? It is the setting free of a slave....

It should be mentioned that the setting free of a slave has been highly commended. Islam controlled slavery in such a graceful and practical way that it made the maintaining of a slave a great responsibility for the master, and at the same time it enjoined so much care and kindness to the slaves that in many cases when the slaves were set free they did not like to leave their masters.

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Thirdly, Islam restored dignity to slaves and enhanced their social status. It made no distinction between a slave or a free man, and all were treated with equality. It was this fact that always attracted slaves to Islam. It is painful to see that those who never cease to be vociferous in their unjust criticism of Islam should take no notice of this principle of equality, when even in this enlightened age there are countries where laws are made discriminating against the vast majority of population, to keep them in practical servitude.

Islam recognises no distinction of race or colour, black or white, citizens or soldiers, rulers or subjects; they are perfectly equal, not in theory only, but in practice. The first *mu'azzin* (herald of the prayer call) of Islam, a devoted adherent of the Prophet and an esteemed disciple, was a Negro slave. The Qur'an lays down the measure of superiority in verse thirteen of chapter forty-nine. It is addressed to mankind, the whole human race, and preaches the natural brotherhood of man without distinction of tribe, clan, race or colour. It says:

O you men! We have created you of a male and a female, and then We made you (into different) races and tribes so that you may know (and recognise) each other. Surely the most honourable of you with Allah is the one who is most pious among you; surely Allah is All-Knowing and Aware.

This verse makes clear the view point of Islam as regards human life on earth. It lays down only one criterion of superiority or honour and that is piety, which means complete obedience to the will of God. It annihilates all man-made and artificial distinctions of race and colour which we find all over the world even now. To explain the qualities of piety, let us note what Allah says:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West,

> *righteousness is this that one should believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the beggars and* ***to those in bondage*** *and keep up prayers, pay the poor-rate; and those who fulfil their promise and the patient ones in distress and affliction and in the time of war - these are they who are the truthful and these are they who are pious. (The Qur'an 2:177)*

This verse clearly shows that by itself there is no specific virtue in turning towards any particular direction for prayer. (The unity of the *Qiblah* indicates the unity of faith which leads to spiritual unity and culminates in physical harmony.) The belief and practice enjoined in the verse are the real virtues, and apart from being ordered by God, they appeal to human reasoning. Please mark that "to give away wealth out of love for God to...those in bondage" is one of them.

In a tradition from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, it is stated that when a person hits his slave (male or female), without any legal justification, then the only way of accounting for that act is setting the slave free even if that act of hitting is within the limits fixed by God. In another tradition, Zurarah asked the same Imam about the attitude of a master towards the slaves. The Imam answered that "an act unintentionally done by the slaves is not punishable but when they are persistently and intentionally disobeying the will of the master, then they can be punished." It would be of interest to know that a slave was given the right to sue his master. A third tradition from the same Imam says that a man possessing the following four characteristics will be forgiven and will be placed highly in the values of realms of heaven: (1) one who shelters an orphan and takes interest in the circumstances and problems in which orphan is placed and is kind to him in a fatherly way, gives him the love of parents; (2) one who is kind and helpful to the weak; (3) one who spends on his parents and is kind, thoughtful and looking towards them; (4) and lastly, the one who is not furious in his behaviour towards his servant or slave and helps him in the work one has ordered, and refrains from ordering him such task which is beyond his capacity.

"Islam enjoined that a master should treat his slave as one of his family-members; he must be given all the necessities of life, just like any other dependent. The Prophet used to eat together with his slaves and servants, and sit with them; he himself did not eat or dress better than them, nor did he discriminate against them in any way.

"The masters were obliged not to put them under hardship; slaves were not to be tortured, abused or treated unjustly. They could marry among themselves (with their master's permission) or with free men or women. They could appear as witnesses, and participate with free men in all affairs. Many of them were appointed as governors, commanders of army and administrators.

"In the eyes of Islam, a pious slave has precedence over an unpious free man."[17]

It is stated in reliable traditions from the Prophet that one should feed his slave what he himself eats and should dress him with what he himself dresses. In his famous sermon in 'Arafat, on 9th Dhul-hijjah 9 AH, during his last pilgrimage, the Prophet said, "...and your slaves, see that you feed them such food as you eat yourselves and dress him with what you yourself dress. And if they commit a mistake which you are not inclined to forgive then sell them, for they are the servants of Allah and are not to be tormented...".[18]

To say that Islam treated slaves on the basis of equality would be an understatement. Because, in fact, for a number of offences, the punishment meted out to a slave was half of the punishment meted out to others.[19] This was in contrast to the established practice of every nation to punish slaves more severely than the free men. Professor Davis writes, "The criminal law was almost everywhere more severe for slaves than freemen."[20]

The Prophet of Islam always exhorted his followers to treat their slaves like family-members. He and his household always treated their servants as such. A female servant in the employ of Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, testifies that her mistress had made it a rule to share all household drudgery with her and insisted that the servant should have rest every alternative days when she, Fatimah, would attend to the work. Thus, there was equal division of work between the mistress of the house and the maid-servant

It is also recorded that once 'Ali and his male servant Qambar went to a shop where 'Ali selected two garments, one a cheap coarse dress, the other expensive. He gave the expensive garment to Qambar. Qambar was shocked. "Oh Master!", he said, "This is the better one and you are the ruler of the Muslims. You should take this one." 'Ali replied, "No, Qambar, you are young and young man should wear better clothes." Could such a treatment produce any sense of inferiority in slaves? Masters were forbidden to exact more work than was just and proper. They were ordered never to address their male or female slaves by the degrading appellation, but by the more affectionate name of "my young man', or "my young maid"; it was also enjoined that all slaves should be dressed, clothed and fed exactly as their masters and mistresses did. It was also ordered that in no case should the mother be separated from her child, nor brother from brother, nor father from son, nor husband from wife, nor one relative from another.

Let us now refer to the Qur'an:

> *Worship Allah (alone) and associate nothing with Him, and do good to parents, to kinsfolk, to orphans, to the needy, to the neighbour who is a relative, to the neighbour who is a stranger, to a companion by your side, to the wayfarer and to (the slave) which your right hands possess; verily Allah loves not the proud, the boastful. (4:36)*

The Holy Prophet gifted a slave to Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and told him to maintain him in the best way, to feed him whatever he himself ate, to clothe him with whatever clothes he liked for himself. Abu Dharr had a robe which he immediately tore into two, and gave one piece to the slave. The Prophet said, "Excellent!" Abu Dharr took the slave home and liberated him. The Prophet was highly pleased with Abu Dharr and said, "God will reward you for it."

How Imam Zaynul 'Abidin, the fourth Imam, treated his slave-girl is well-known in Islamic history. Once while serving food to the Imam, she accidentally dropped a bowl of hot soup on him. She was deeply conscious of the injury and pain she had caused to the Imam. She knew very well the disposition of the holy Imam and began reciting the Qur'anic verse, *"Those who restrain their anger."*

"I have restrained my anger," the Imam replied.

"And those who forgive the people," she went on.

"I have forgiven you," he said.

Lastly, she said, "*And God loves those who do good to others."*

The Imam replied, "I set you free to seek the pleasure of God."

The slave-girl had quoted those words from verse 133 of chapter 3 of the Qur'an. We reproduce the full verse here:

> *Those who spend (in alms) alike in prosperity and straitness, and who restrain (their) anger, and those who forgive the people, and Allah loves those who do good (to others).*

Once someone remarked that the slaves of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin say to each other that they were not in the least afraid of him. On hearing this, the Imam prostrated to God in thanks-giving and exclaimed, "I thank God that his creatures are not afraid of me."

From what we have said above it must be clear how kindly and lovingly the slaves were treated by the Holy Prophet and the Imams of Ahlul Bayt, and those who followed the injunctions of the Qur'an and the examples set by the Prophet and the Imams.

On the attitude of Muslim master with his slaves, Will Durant says, "...he handled them with a genial humanity that made their lot no worse - perhaps better, as more secure - than that of a factory worker in nineteenth-century Europe."[21]

At the end of the 18th century, Mouradgea d'Ohsson (a main source of information for the Western writers on the Ottoman empire) declared:

> "There is perhaps no nation where the captives, the slaves, the very toilers in the galleys are better provided for or treated with more kindness than among the Muhammedans."[22]

P. L Riviere writes:

> "A master was enjoined to make his slave share the bounties he received from God. It must be recognised that, in this respect, the Islamic teaching acknowledged such a respect for human personality and showed a sense of equality which is searched for in vain in ancient civilization"[23]

And not only in ancient civilisations; even in the modern Christian civilisation the ingrained belief of racial supremacy is still manifesting itself every day. A. J. Toynbee says in *Civilization on Trial*:

> "The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue..." Then he comments that "in this perilous matter of race feeling it can hardly be denied that (the triumph of English-speaking peoples) has been a misfortune."[24]

Napoleon Bonaparte is recorded as saying about the condition of slaves in Muslim countries:

> "The slave inherits his master's property and marries his daughter. The majority of the Pashas had been slaves. Many of the grand viziers, all the Mamelukes, Ali Ben Mourad Beg, had been slaves. They began their lives by performing the most menial services in the houses of their masters and were subsequently raised in status for their merit or by favour. In the West, on the contrary, the slave has always been below the position of the domestic servants; he occupies the lowest rug. The Romans emancipated their slaves, but the emancipated were never considered as equal to the free-born. The ideas of the East and West are so different that it took a long time to make the Egyptians understand that all the army was not composed of slaves belonging to the Sultan al-Kabir."[25]

Notes:

[1]. Toynbee, A. J., *Mankind and Mother Earth*, (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1976), p.12.

[2]. Ameer Ali, *Muhammadan Law*, vol.2, p.31.

[3]. al-Tabataba'i, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir'l Qur'an*, vol.16, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1390/1971), pp. 338-358.

[4]. al-Waqidi, Muhammad bin 'Umar, *Kitabul Maghazi*, ed. M. Jones, vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.129; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqatul Kabir*, Vol. II:1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1912), pp.11, 14.

[5]. Ameer Ali, *Muhammadan Law*, vol. 2, pp. 31-2.

[6]. al-Khu'i, Sayyid Abu'l Qasim, *Minhajus Salihin*, 3rd ed., vol. II (Najaf, 1974), pp. 328-331; also see the Qur'an, 4:92, 5:89, 58:3.

[7]. *Ibid.*

[8]. al-'Amili, Hurr, *Wasa'ilu 'sh-Shi'ah*, vol.16 (Tehran, 1983), p.128.

[9]. *Ibid.*

[10]. al-'Amili, *op. cit.*, vol.16, p.101.

[11]. *Ibid*, p. 111.

[12]. *Ibid*, pp. 121-2.

[13]. al-Hilli, Muhaqqiq, *Sharaya'ul Islam*, (*kitabul-'itq*); also see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*:, vol. I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), p. 31.

[14]. *Ibid*, pp. 31-3.

[15]. *Ibid*, pp. 43-4.

[16]. *Ibid*, p. 3.

[17]. al-Tabataba'i, *op. cit.*, vol.16, pp. 338-358.

[18]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. II:1, p. 133; al-'Amili, *op. cit.*, vol.16, 21.

[19]. al-Amili, *op. cit.*, vol.18, pp. 401f, 527-8, 586-7; vol. 19, pp. 73, 154f.

[20]. Davis, D.B., *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (N.Y.: 1969), p. 60.

[21]. Hurgronje C., *Mohammedanism*, (N.Y., 1916), p. 128 as quoted by W. Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, vol. IV (N.Y., 1950), p. 209.

[22]. As quoted in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol.I, p. 35.

[23]. Riviere P.L., *Revue Bleaue* (June 1939).

[24]. Toynbee, A.J., *Civilization on Trial* (New York, 1948), p. 205.

[25]. Cherfils, *Bonaparte et l'Islam* (Paris, 1914), p. (?).

Index

Slaves in the History of Islam

To give an idea of how Islam raised the status of slaves and treated them as human beings instead of brutes of burden (which was their common lot before Islam), the following tradition is of particular interest:

One day the Prophet was sitting with Salman, Bilal, 'Ammar, Suhayb, Khabbab [all ex-slaves] and a group of poor Muslims, when some unbelievers passed from there. When they saw these "unimportant" people with the Prophet, they said, "Have you chosen these persons from among your people? Do you want us to follow them? Has Allah bestowed His favour on them, that they have believed, and not us? You should better remove them from you; if you do so, then perhaps we would follow you." The Prophet did not agree to their demand, and Allah sent the following verse in this respect:

And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, they desire only His favour; neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours, so that you should drive them away and thus be of the unjust. And thus do We try some of them by others so that they say: "Are these they upon whom Allah has conferred benefit from among us?" Does not Allah know the grateful? (And when those who believe in our signs come to you, say: "Peace be upon you, your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself") (6:52-54)

Salman, Bilal, 'Ammar and their companions say: "When Allah revealed these verses, the Prophet turned towards us, called us to come nearer to him, and said, 'Your lord has ordained mercy on Himself.' Then we used to sit with him, and when he wanted to stand up (and go from there), he did so. Then Allah revealed:-

> *And withhold yourself with those who call on their Lord in the morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and let not your eyes pass from them.. (18:28)*

"When this was revealed, the Prophet used to make us sit so near him that our thighs almost touched his thighs; and he did not stand up before us. When we felt that the time had come for him to stand, we took his leave; and then he stood up after we had gone. And he used to say to

us, 'I thank God who did not take me out of this world until He ordered me to keep patience with a group of my *ummah.* I shall spend my life with you, and, after death, shall remain with you.'"[26]

I propose to give here a short list of some of the slaves who occupy the highest spiritual and temporal status in Islam and in the Muslim society, from the very beginning of Islam.

1. Salman, the Persian

First and foremost, of course, is Salman al-Farsi (the Persian). He was the son of a Zoroastrian priest in the province of Fars. From the very beginning, he was aspiring to find and follow a religion free from the embellishes of human interpolations. This was long before the advent of Islam. He was converted to Christianity, and served one distinguished priest after another in quest of divine knowledge. After long lasting hardships and troubles, he attached himself to a monk in Antioch, who at the time of his death, advised him that the time was ripe for the emergence of the last Prophet in the world. He told him to make his way towards Hijaz, the Arabian province which has Mecca and Medina in it. In the way, he was taken as a captive by a gang of warriors and was sold from one master to another, till he changed ten masters. Lastly, he was purchased by a Jewess in Medina. It is not possible to give the details of the tortures meted out to him during his long-lasting captivity. Still it seems that fate was bringing him nearer to his goal, because it was in Medina that he met the Holy Prophet of Islam. After some subtle tests Salman recognised in him the long-awaited "that Prophet" of the New Testament (John 1:19-25). He accepted Islam.[27] The Holy Prophet of Islam purchased him from his Jewess mistress and set him free. It was after the battle of Badr, the first battle of Islam, and before the battle of Uhud.[28]

Salman's faith, knowledge, piety and his unparalleled spiritual achievements put him above all the companions of the Holy Prophet. He is one of the four pillars of true Muslim faith (together with Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Miqdad and 'Ammar). He has the unique distinction of being included in the *Ahlul Bayt* (the family of the Prophet) by virtue of his faith and piety. The traditions showing his superiority and virtues cannot be narrated in this short booklet. Nevertheless, I am quoting some of them to give the readers a glimpse of his status in the eyes of the Prophet and his successors.

Though he had already accepted Islam, Salman did not participate in the battle of Badr because of his captivity at that time. After Badr, he took active part in all the battles fought to defend Islam and the Muslims. When the Qurayshites of Mecca together with many other tribes including the Jews of Medina, besieged Medina, it was Salman who advised the Prophet to dig a moat around Medina in order to prevent the enemy from attacking the weak points of the city. And it is for this reason that this battle is called the "Battle of Moat *(khandaq)*".[29]

It was at this battle that a friendly argument began between the emigrants of Mecca (the *muhajirun*) and the natives of Medina (the *ansar*). The subject: Was Salman a *muhajir* or an *ansar*? The *ansar* claimed that as Salman came to the Prophet in Medina, he belonged to the *ansar* group; the *muhajirun* claimed that as Salman had left his home and family, he was a *muhajir*.

This friendly dispute also shows how great had become the status of Salman within a short period of three years that every group wanted to claim him as their own. Anyhow, the dispute was referred to the highest authority - the Prophet, who decided that Salman was from neither of the two groups; he said' "*Salman minna Ahl al-Bayt* -Salman is from us, the family [of the Prophet]."[30] It was such a great honour which has continuously been mentioned in traditions and poems. A poet says:-

The devotion of Salman was his pedigree,
while there was no relationship between Noah and his son.

The Holy Prophet had also said, "Salman is a sea which cannot be exhausted and a treasure which never comes to end. Salman is from us, the family [of the Prophet]; he has been given wisdom, and is bestowed with reason."[31] Imam 'Ali said, "Salman was like Luqman, the Sage."[32] Luqman is thought by many Muslim scholars to be a prophet. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said that he was even better than Luqman.[33] Imam Muhammad al-Baqir said that Salman was from the *mutawassimin* (those who know the inner character of the people).[34] Numerous traditions say that Salman knew *al-ismul a'zam* (the greatest name of Allah);[35] and that he was from the *muhaddathin* (those to whom the angels talk).[36]

To show the greatness of Salman, it is enough that the Prophet said, "Faith has ten grades, and Salman is on the tenth (i.e., highest) grade, Abu Dharr on the ninth, and Miqdad on the eighth grade." Whenever Gabriel came to the Prophet, he used to request him to convey the greetings of Allah to Salman, and to teach him the knowledge of the future.[37] Accordingly, Salman used to visit the Prophet at nights, where the Prophet and Amirul mu'minin 'Ali taught him from the secret knowledge of Allah which was never taught to any other person because nobody could bear it. It was because of this that Imam 'Ali said, "Salman got the knowledge of the first and the knowledge of the last ones; he is a sea which is never exhausted and he is from us - the family of the Prophet."[38]

'Allamah Majlisi writes in *'Aynu'l-Hayat* that it is understood from the traditions of Shi'ah and Sunnis both that after the *ma'sumin* nobody among the companions of the Prophet was equal to Salman, Abu Dharr and Miqdad. Imam Musa al-Kazim said, "On the day of resurrection someone will call on behalf of Allah that 'Where are the *hawariyyin* and faithfuls of Muhammad bin 'Abdullah, who stayed firmly on the path shown by him and never broke his convent?' Then will arise Salman, Miqdad and Abu Dharr."[39]

The Holy Prophet said, "Allah has ordered me to love four of my companions." People asked who those four companions were. The Holy Prophet said, "'Ali bin Abi Talib, Salman, Miqdad and Abu Dharr."[40] According to traditions, Allah sent for Salman gifts and presents from Paradise; and the Paradise eagerly awaited his arrival.[41]

Once Mansur bin Buzurg, himself of Persian origin, asked Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq as to why he remembered Salman al-Farsi so much. The Imam said, "Do not say 'Salman al-Farsi (the Persian)'. Say, 'Salman of Muhammad.' You should know that the reason of my often remembering him are three of his special virtues: First, he discarded him own preferences in view of the preferences of Amirul mu'minin 'Ali. Second, he loved poor and preferred them against rich and wealthy persons. Third, he loved knowledge and knowledgeable persons. Verily Salman was a good servant of God, a pure Muslim and he was not from the polytheists."[42]

Once some companions of the Prophet were describing their forefathers, showing pride in their family-trees. Salman was also among them. 'Umar, who later become the second caliph, turned towards him and asked him to describe his pedigree and family-tree. Salman said, "I am Salman, son of a servant of Allah. I was poor, and Allah made me rich through Muhammad (upon whom be peace); I was a slave, and Allah set me free through Muhammad (upon whom be peace). This is my pedigree and my status, O 'Umar!"[43]

It has been stated earlier that Abu Dharr himself was one of the four pillars of faith and was on the ninth grade of faith (*iman*). But even Abu Dharr could not understand Salman properly.

Once he went to the house of Salman. Salman had put a cooking pot on fire. The two friends were talking when all of a sudden the pot tumbled down and overturned. But, wonder of wonders, not a single drop fell out of the pot. Salman put the pot on the fire again. After some time the same thing happened again. No drop was spilt out, and Salman nonchalantly put it right again.

Abu Dharr was flabbergasted. At once he came out and met Imam 'Ali in the way. He narrated to him what he had seen. 'Ali said, "O Abu Dharr, if Salman informs you of all the things that he knows, you will wonder. O Abu Dharr, Salman is a gate towards Allah on the earth. Anybody who accepts him is a believer, anybody who rejects him is a *kafir*. Salman is from us - the family [of the Prophet]."[44]

I think these few authentic traditions are enough to show the highest status of Salman in the eyes of Allah, in the eyes of the Prophet, Imam 'Ali and his successors.

Salman was appointed governor of Iran. He came to Mada'in, the capital at that time. The people of Mada'in, long accustomed to the splendour and glory of the imperial court of Iranian emperors, came out to welcome the governor designate. They were waiting for a

pompous caravan. But no caravan or entourage ever came. Instead, an old man, carrying a few of his belongings on his shoulder was coming towards them on foot. They asked the newcomer whether he had seen the entourage of their governor. The newcomer said, "I am your governor." And that simple-hearted governor of Mada'in ruled with such knowledge, compassion, justice and firmness that within a short period whole Mada'in was in his hands. That conquest was made not by police or army, but by the power of his spiritual perfection, piety and forbearance.

He died in 36 AH in Mada'in. Imam 'Ali came from Medina to Mada'in in half a day by miracle just to perform the burial rites of his trusted companion and brother.[45] It was a unique distinction of Salman. His grave in Mada'in (in Iraq) is visited by hundreds of pilgrims every day. The pilgrimage *(ziyarat)* prescribed for that visit shows his greatness in the eyes of Allah.

ii. Zayd bin Harithah

Zayd bin Harithah bin Sharahil al-Kalbi, an Arab boy, was abducted in his childhood and sold as a slave. This happened before Islam. Hakim bin Hizam bin Khuwaylid purchased him in the market of 'Ukaz, and presented him to his aunt, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, who gave him to the Holy Prophet.[46]

Zayd's father was searching for him. After a long time he came to know that Zayd was in Mecca. He came to Mecca and offered to pay ransom so that Zayd might be set free. The Prophet said that if Zayd wanted to be united with his family, then there was no need of any ransom. He was free to go. But Zayd declined to go with his father and preferred to remain with Muhammad. Harithah, Zayd's father, was extremely grieved and said, "O son, do you prefer to remain a slave rather than a free man? And do you prefer to leave your own father and mother for Muhammad?" Zayd said, "What I have seen of the life of Muhammad is compelling me that I should not leave him for any person". Such was the loving attitude of the Holy Prophet that it had captured the hearts of all those who came to know him. And it was this unique characteristic of his generosity which made almost the whole Arabia accept Islam within a short period of twenty three years.

Anyhow, Harithah was shocked and announced in Ka'bah that from then on neither he was father of Zayd nor Zayd was his son. It was then that Prophet Muhammad announced in the hijr Isma'il (besides the Ka'bah) that "I declare that from now on Zayd is my son." Harithah, hearing this, returned to his home but in a less gloomy mood.[47]

Zayd bin Harithah was now called Zayd bin Muhammad. This continued till 5 AH when the following verse was revealed:

> *God had not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body; nor has He made your wives whom you divorce by zihar your mothers; nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But God tells you the truth, and He shows the (right) way. Call them by (the names of) their fathers, that is better in the sight of God. (33:4-5)*

Then Zayd was again called Zayd bin Harithah.[48]

The Prophet had married Zayd to his cousin Zaynab bin Jahash, who was the daughter of his aunt, Umaymah.[49] When the couple started quarrelling and Zayd divorced Zaynab, the Prophet, on the command of Allah, married Zaynab himself. (She at that time was more than fifty years old.[50] This fact alone is enough to clear away the thick cobweb of the malicious stories which the Prophet's enemies have woven around this holy marriage.)

Allah says in the Qur'an:

> *Then, when Zayd had dissolved (his marriage), He joined her in marriage to you in order that there may be no difficulty for the believers in the matter of marriage with the wives of their adopted sons when the latter had dissolved (their marriage) with the necessary (formality) with them, and God's command must be fulfilled. (33:37)*

By these two marriages of Zaynab bin Jahash, two pagan taboos were abolished: By the first marriage, the idea of racial supremacy or the belief that being a slave or freed slave was a stigma on the dignity of the person was destroyed.[51]

When a cousin of the Prophet could be married to a freed slave who could frown in future on marriage of slaves with free women? (See the Qur'an 2:221)

And by the second marriage, the belief that an adopted son was a real son was destroyed. When the Prophet himself did marry the divorced wife of his adopted son, then how could it be claimed that an adopted son was a real son? Thus the custom of Arabia which recognised an adopted son as a real son was most effectively abolished.[52]

Zayd is the only person among the companions of the Prophet to be mentioned by name in the Qur'an. He was the third person to accept Islam after Khadijah bint Khuwaylid and 'Ali bin Abi Talib. Zayd was the commander of the Muslim army sent to fight against the Christian forces at Muta. After the martyrdom of Zayd, Ja'far, the

cousin of the Prophet, took over the command and he also was martyred. The Prophet was much grieved on these two deaths.[53]

Zayd had a son, Usamah, from his first wife, Umm Ayman. Usamah was 19 years old when he was appointed the commander of the army which consisted of all the well known companions of the Prophet, including Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. When some of the companions frowned upon this appointments, the Prophet delivered a lecture in which he said, "Zayd was better than you, and his son Usamah also is better than you all." Usamah was ordered by the Prophet to go with the army to avenge the death of his father at Muta.[54]

iii. 'Ammar bin Yasir

'Ammar bin Yasir was one of the most respected companions of the Prophet and the faithful follower of Imam 'Ali. He was from those who were brutally tortured in the cause of Islam. He did two *hijrahs* - to Ethiopia[55] and Medina; he prayed towards two *qiblahs* - Baytul Maqdis and Ka'bah. He participated in all the battles of Islam right from the beginning,[56] and was martyred in the battle of Siffin on 9th Safar, 37 AH.

'Ammar and his parents were amongst the first converts to Islam. His father Yasir was from the tribe of Qahtan in Yemen. He, together with his two brothers, came to Mecca in search of a lost brother. His brothers returned to their homeland; but Yasir stayed in Mecca where he entered into a covenant with Abu Hudhayfah (from the tribe of Bani Makhzum), and married his slave-girl, Sumayyah bint Khayyat. Yasir and Sumayyah begot two sons, 'Abdullah and 'Ammar, who according to the custom of Arabia, were considered the slaves of Abu Hudhayfah.[57]

After their conversion to Islam, Abu Jahl, with the help of other pagans, started torturing the whole family mercilessly. Ironnails were put upon their naked bodies and they were made to lie down on the burning sand of the desert. The heat of the sun and the desert sand made the iron mails hot like fire; their skins got burned. This torture used to continue till they became unconscious. Then the iron mails were removed and water was poured on them.[58] The Prophet felt very sorry for the suffering family; but was unable to protect them. Still he used to go near them and give them courage to forbear the tyrannies of their tormentors. He gave them good tidings of Heaven and said, "Be patient, O family of Yasir, because your promised place is Heaven".[59]

Yasir and Sumayyah were brutally murdered by the pagans of the Quraysh, under the leadership of Abu Jahl. It is a great distinction of this distinguished family that all of them were martyred in the cause of Islam. Sumayyah was very pious and God-

fearing lady; and she was the first woman martyr of Islam.

When his parents were killed, 'Ammar pretended to denounce Islam, and thus saved his life. Then he came to the Prophet bitterly weeping that he had to utter the words of *kufr* so that he could slip away from the hands of the infidels. The Prophet told him not to worry, as he had not uttered those words with his heart. In this connection, the following verse was revealed:-

> *He who disbelieves in God after his belief in Him - except he who is compelled (to do so] while his heart remains steadfast with the faith - and he who opened (his) heart for disbelief on them shall be the wrath of Allah and they, shall have a grievous chastisement. (The Qur'an 16:106)*[60].

When 'Ammar described the atrocities meted out to the blessed Sumayyah, the Prophet said, "Patience, O Abu Yaqzan; O Allah, do not punish anyone from the family of Yasir with hell-fire."

When the Prophet came to Medina, and the mosque of the Prophet was being built, 'Ammar enthusiastically carried double load of the stones. At that time he started reciting some lines of poetry, which reached to the ears of 'Uthman (who later became the third caliph), who thought that 'Ammar was taunting him. Overcome by this misunderstanding, 'Uthman hit 'Ammar on the forehead; blood came gushing out and covered his face. He complained to the Prophet, who himself cleansed and dressed the wound and said, "'Ammar is the skin between my eyes and nose." Then he said, "Well, O 'Ammar, you will be killed by a rebellious group; you will be calling them to Heaven, and they will be calling you to Hell.'[61]

'Ammar's importance and honour can also be understood from the following sayings of the Prophet: "'Ammar is with the truth, and the truth is with 'Ammar wherever he may be. 'Ammar is the skin between my eyes and nose; and he will be killed by a rebellious group.'[62] The Prophet also said, "Ammar is filled with faith (*iman*) from head to feet".[63] There are numerous other traditions of the Prophet and the Imams concerning 'Ammar.

'Ammar was one of those faithful companions who always followed Imam 'Ali. In 35th AH when 'Ammar, along with many others, protested against 'Uthman bin 'Affan's (the third caliph) policy on the distribution of the public treasury, the latter got him beaten so mercilessly that the lining of his abdomen was burst and he got hernia.[64] As his father, Yasir had been an ally of Banu Makhzum, so they took 'Ammar (still unconscious) to their home and said that if 'Ammar died they would avenge him with 'Uthman.

As mentioned above, the Prophet had said that he would be killed by a rebellious group; and so it happened. 'Ammar was killed in the 37th year AH by the army of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan. He was then 90 or 91 years old. On the day when he was martyred, he was fighting valiantly against the army of Mu'awiyah, when one Syrian, Abul Ghadiyah al-Muzani, fatally wounded him in the waist; his companions carried him to safety. He asked for water; someone gave him a cup of milk. He said, "True was the saying of the Prophet". People asked him to explain. He replied, "The Prophet had informed me that my last sustenance from this world would be milk." Then he drank some milk and after that he died.[65]

Amirul mu'minin 'Ali was informed of this tragedy. He came immediately and put 'Ammar's head on his lap and recited the following elegy for his faithful companion:

O death, which is to come to me anyhow,
Better give me rest at once;
Because thou host finished off all my friends,
I see that thou doth recognise all my beloned ones,
as though someone is guiding thee to them specially.

Then reciting *"verily we are of God and to God will we return,"* he said, "Anybody who is not extremely grieved on the death of 'Ammar has no share in Islam. May Allah have mercy on 'Ammar." Amirul mu'minin himself said prayer on him, and buried him by his own hands.[66]

'Ammar's martyrdom created a problem for Mu'awiyah because many people in his army did remember the aforesaid saying of the Prophet, and they realised that 'Ammar, by his death, had shown that Mu'awiyah and his army were rebellious and not on the right path. To pacify the army, Mu'awiyah said that it was 'Ali who had caused the death of 'Ammar by bringing him to the battlefield. When Amirul mu'minin 'Ali was informed of this ruse of Mu'awiyah, he said, "Then it was the Prophet himself who killed Hamzah by bringing him to the battlefield of Uhud!"[67]

iv. Miytham al-Tammar

Miytham al-Tammar (the date-seller), son of Yahya, was a slave purchased by Imam 'Ali. But very few people knew that he was a slave because 'Ali emancipated him and he became one of the closest friends of his ex-master. He is counted as one of his *hawariyyun.* It means "disciple" as in the twelve disciples of Jesus.

Imam 'Ali had taught him the secret knowledge of Allah, and gave him insight into future events. He knew the details of death, of sufferings of future, which some times

he described and people laughed at him; but the later events always proved him right.

When 'Ali purchased him, he was called Salim. 'Ali told him that he had heard from the Prophet that "your father in Persia called you Miytham". Miytham was astonished to hear it as nobody in Arabia knew his original name. Then 'Ali told him to keep his original name; thus he became Miytham again, and adopted the agnomen, Abu Salim.[68]

Miytham was a very pious man. It is written that, "...he, may Allah have mercy upon him, was one of those who were very pious, and his skin had dried upon his body [because of fasting and continuous prayers)."

Abu Khalid al-Tammar says that once on a Friday they were sailing in a boat in Euphrates, when water became very stormy. Miytham looked up and told them to put anchor and secure the boat as the storm was to become more violent. Then he said that Mu'awiyah had died just then. The people noted down the date, which afterwards proved correct.[69]

Shaykh Kashshi narrates that one day Miytham al-Tammar was passing by a group from the tribe of Asad, when Habib bin Muzahir came there. They stood talking to each other. Habib said, "It is as though I am looking at an old man (whose head is bald and who has a big stomach, and sells dates and water-melons) that he has been captured and his enemies have crucified him because of his love for and devotion to the family of the Prophet; then they have pierced his stomach." All the characteristics were those of Miytham.

Miytham replied that, "I too am looking at a man (whose face is reddish) who will come to help the son of the Prophet and will be martyred and his head will be brought to Kufah." He meant Habib bin Muzahir.

Then they went their separate ways. The people who heard this conversation said that they had not seen any one more liar than those two. Just then Rushayd al-Hujri (who also was amongst the closest friends of Imam 'Ali and was given the knowledge of future events) came there and asked whether they had seen Habib and Miytham. The people repeated the conversation derisively. Rushayd said, "May Allah have mercy upon Miytham! He forgot to tell that the man who would bring the head of that red-faced man' would get hundred *dirham* more than the others in reward." When Rushayd went away, the people said that he was bigger liar than those two.[70]
Shortly afterwards all the prophecies were fulfilled exactly: Miytham was crucified, Habib was martyred in Karbala, and the man who brought Habib's head to Kufah was given hundred *dirhams* more.

Amirul mu'minin 'Ali had told Miytham that, "You will be captured after me and they will crucify you, and will pierce you with a spear; on the third day blood will ooze out from your nose and mouth and your beard will become red with your own blood. You should wait for that hair-dye. They will crucify you at the door of 'Amr bin Hurayth with nine others; and your cross will be the shortest, but your honour in the presence of Allah will be the highest. Come with me; I will show you the tree upon which you are to be crucified." Then he showed Miytham that tree.[71]

Another tradition says that 'Ali bin Abi Talib asked Miytham, "What will be your position when the bastard of Bani Umayyah [i.e., 'Ubaydullah bin Ziyad] will compel you to curse me and to abuse me?" Miytham said, "By Allah, I will never do so." 'Ali said, "By Allah, then they will kill and crucify you." Miytham said that he would bear those tyrannies; and that such sufferings were nothing in the way of Allah. Then 'Ali gave him the good tiding: "O Miytham you will be with me in the hereafter in my grade."[72]

After the martyrdom of 'Ali, Miytham used to go and pray near the tree. He used to say, "May Allah bless thee, O tree; 1 have been created for thee, and thou art growing for me." Whenever he met 'Amr bin Hurayth, he would say to him, "When I come into your neighbourhood, you should remember my right as a neighhour."[73]

In 60 AH Miytham went for *'umrah* (the minor pilgrimage). In Medina, he visited the house of Umm Salamah, the Prophet's wife. When he introduced himself, Umm Salamah said, "By Allah, many were the times when I heard the Holy Prophet mentioning and recommending you to 'Ali bin Abi Talib in the heart of night". Miytham learnt that Imam Husayn had gone outside Medina to one of his gardens. Miytham was in hurry so he told Umm Salamah to convey his greetings to Imam Husayn and tell him that very soon "we will meet in the presence of Allah".

Umm Salamah told her maid to rub perfume onto the beard of Miytham. Rubbing perfume on the beard was a mark of high respect in Arabia. After that, Miytham said, "O Mother of the Faithfuls, you have put perfume on my beard; but very soon it will be dyed in my blood in the love for and devotion to you, the Ahlul Bayt." Umm Salamah said that Imam Husayn remembered him very much. Miytham said, "I too always remember him; but I am in a hurry, and there is a fate waiting for me and him both; and we both will reach it."

On coming out he met 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas and told him to ask whatever he wanted to know from the interpretation of the Qur'an, as "I have read the Qur'an from Amirul mu'minin and I know both its revelation (*tanzil*) and interpretation *(ta'wil)*." Ibn 'Abbas called for paper and ink-pot and started writing Miytham's dictation. That a man like 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas did not frown from writing his dictation shows the high respect of

Miytham in the learned circle of the Muslim community.[74]

Then Miytham said, "What will be your feeling, O Ibn 'Abbas, when you will see me martyred with nine others?" Hearing this Ibn 'Abbas started tearing the paper, saying that Miytham had become a sorcerer. Miytham said, "Do not tear that paper. If you see that what I have said does not happen, then you will have plenty of time to tear that paper.[75]

After the *'umrah,* he returned to Kufah. During his absence, 'Ubaydullah bin Ziyad was made governor of Kufah. One day he asked the *mu'arrif* (a local informer) of Kufah about Miytham. On being informed that Miytham has gone to *'umrah*, he told the *mu'arrif* that if he failed to produce Miytham he would be killed in his place. So the *mu'arrif* went to Qadisiyyah to wait for Miytham. On reaching Qadisiyyah, Miytham was captured and brought before Ibn Ziyad. The people told Ibn Ziyad that Miytham was the nearest of all to 'Ali bin Abi Talib. Ibn Ziyad was astonished: "Was 'Ali trusting this *'ajami* (a non-Arab) so much?" Then the following conversation took place: Ibn Ziyad: "Where is your protector?"

Miytham: "He is waiting for the tyrants, and you are one of them."

Ibn Ziyad: "Do you dare to speak like this before me? Now there is only one way to save your life: you must curse Abu Turab."

Miytham: "I do not know who Abu Turab is."

Ibn Ziyad: "Abuse and curse 'Ali bin Abi Talib."

Miytham: "What will you do if I refuse?"

Ibn Ziyad: "By Allah, I will kill you."

Miytham: "My master [i.e., 'Ali] had informed me that you would kill and martyr me, together with nine others, at the door of 'Amr bin Hurayth."

Ibn Ziyad: "I will not do so, thus proving your master a liar."

Miytham: "My master did not say any lie. Whatever he said, he had heard it from the holy Prophet, who had heard it from Jibra'il, who had heard it from Allah. How, therefore, can you prove them wrong? Not only this, I even know how you will kill me and where you will martyr me. And I know that I will be the first man in Islam who will be reined in the mouth to prevent me from speaking and the first man whose tongue

will be cut out".

Ibn Ziyad imprisoned Miytham and Mukhtar bin Abu 'Ubaydah al-Thaqafi. Miytham informed Mukhtar that he would be freed from the prison and that he would avenge the blood of Imam Husayn and would kill this man (i.e., Ibn Ziyad). And it happened that when Mukhtar was taken out to be killed, a messenger came from Yazid with an order to release Mukhtar.

Then Miytham was taken out and crucified on a tree at the door of 'Amr bin Hurayth. Now 'Amr understood what Miytham meant by his request; and so, he ordered his maid to burn incense at his cross and clean the earth beneath him.

Miytham turned the cross into pulpit. He started narrating the traditions of the holy Prophet extolling the virtues and superiority of the Ahlul Bayt, and also the traditions concerning the wickedness of Banu Umayyah and their being cursed in the Qur'an and *hadith;* and how they would be destroyed at last. Ibn Ziyad was informed of this unfailing courage and self-sacrificing spirit of Miytham. He feared lest Miytham's lectures turn the masses against the Umayyads and humiliate them in the eyes of the public. So he ordered that a rein be put into Miytham's mouth to prevent him from speaking. After sometime, his tongue was cut off.

On the third day, some one wounded him with a spear saying, "I am wounding you though I know that you always fasted during the day and stood the whole night in prayers." In the evening blood came oozing out from his nose and mouth, reddening his face and chest, and he left this world. He was martyred in the cause of Islam, ten days before the arrival of Imam Husayn in Karbala. It means that he died on 21st or 22nd Dhu'l hijjah, 60 AH. At night seven date-sellers secretly took away his body and buried him on the bank of a canal and erased the signs of the grave.[76]

Later on when there was no danger, the grave was shown to the public. Now there is a big shrine upon it where the devotees go for pilgrimage.

One of the graces of Allah upon Miytham was that knowledge and piety remained in his progeny, generation after generation. His sons, grandsons and great-grandsons were among the respected companions of the Shi'ite Imams. Miytham had six sons: Muhammad, Shu'ayb, Salih, 'Ali, 'Imran and Hamzah. All of them were among the companions of the fourth, fifth and sixth Imams.

Among his grandsons, Isma'il, Ya'qub and Ibrahim (all sons of Shu'ayb) were companions of the fifth, sixth and seventh Imams. 'Ali bin Isma'il bin Shu'ayb bin Miytham is counted among the most prominent theologians of Shi'ism. His discussions with his adversaries show his knowledge, intelligence and presence of

mind. Moreover, we find many other names in the progeny of Miytham mentioned in the books of traditions and biographies (*rijal*).

v. Bilal al-Habashi

Bilal al-Habashi (the Ethiopian) was the first *mu'azzin* of the Prophet. His father was called Riyah, and his mother Jumanah; his agnomen was Abu 'Abdillah and Abu 'Umar. He was from those who accepted Islam in the very beginning. He participated in the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khandaq and other battles.[77]

Bilal was at first a slave of Safwan bin Umayyah. During his slavery, he was tortured inhumanely because of his faith. He was made to lie down naked on the burning sand of the Arabian desert; a heavy stone was put on his chest which made breathing difficult for him. And as if it was not enough, some heavily built persons used to jump upon the stone, trying to crush him to death. Still the only sound heard from Bilal was "Ahad! Ahad! (One God! One God!).[78]

Seeing such barbarism meted out to Bilal, the Prophet was very much grieved. Abu Bakr purchased and emancipated him. In the 2nd year AH when the *adhan* (the call to the prayers) was prescribed, Bilal was given the honour to call *adhan*.[79] Later on, some people suggested that this honour should be given to someone else, because Bilal could not pronounce the Arabic letter *shin* properly. The Prophet said, "The *sin* of Bilal is *shin* in the hearing of God." Allah does not see the physical manifestation; He appreciates the purity of heart.

Once Bilal came to the holy Prophet and recited some lines of poetry in his own language in the praise of the Prophet. The Prophet asked Hassan bin Thabit al-Ansari to translate it into Arabic. Hassan said:

When noble traits are described in our country,
thou art pointed out as a model among us.

It is a well-known fact that the Prophet had an admirable sense of humour - although even in witticism, he never spoke but truth. Once an old lady of Medina asked him to pray to Allah to give her a place in the Paradise. The Prophet said, "Old women would not enter the Paradise." She went out crying. Bilal saw her and asked her why she was crying. She narrated the whole episode. Bilal came with the lady to the Prophet, and said, "This woman is narrating such and such from you?" The Prophet said, "Even black men would not enter the Paradise." Now Bilal too started crying. Then 'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet reached there and learning of the episode, tried to intercede with the Prophet, who told him that even old men would not enter the Paradise. When he too joined the crying group, the Prophet told them to be

cheerful because Allah would create them young and with bright faces and then they would go into Paradise.[80]

Bilal was devoted to the Ahlul Bayt. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq is recorded as having said, "May God bless Bilal! He loved us, the family of the Prophet, and was one of the most pious servants of Allah."

It is written in *Kamil Baha'i* that Bilal did not say *adhan* or *iqamah* for Abu Bakr,[81] and did not pay allegiance to Abu Bakr as a caliph. Shaykh Abu Ja'far al-Tusi has narrated in *Ikhtiyar al-Rijal* a report that Bilal refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr; and 'Umar caught hold of his dress made of hide and said, "Is this the reward of Abu Bakr; he emancipated you and you are now refusing to pay allegiance to him?". Bilal said, "If Abu Bakr had emancipated me for the pleasure of Allah, then let him leave me alone for Allah; and if he had emancipated me for his service, then I am ready to render him the services required. But I am not going to pay allegiance to a person whom the Messenger of God had not appointed as his caliph." 'Umar then dealt harshly with him and said, "You should not remain here among us." That is why after the Prophet's death, Bilal could not remain in Medina; and migrated to Syria.

Some of his poetry on this subject is as follows:

By Allah! I did not turn towards Abu Bakr,
If Allah had not protected me,
hyena would have stood on my limbs.
Allah has bestowed on me good
and honoured me,
Surely there is vast good with Allah.
You will not find me following an innovator,
Because I am not an innovator, as they are.

The author of *Isti'ab* writes, "When the Prophet died, Bilal wanted to go to Syria. Abu Bakr told him to remain in his (personal) service. Bilal said, 'If you have emancipated me for yourself, then make me a captive again; but if you had emancipated me for Allah, then let me go in the way of Allah.' Abu Bakr left him alone."[82]

Bilal died in Damascus by plague in the year 18 AH or 20 AH, and was buried in Bab Saghir.[83] His grave in Damascus is visited by thousands of devoted Muslims every year.

vi. Fizzah

Fizzah al-Nubiyyah (of Nuba, at present in Sudan) has also gained immortality for

her devotion to Islam and her love for the Ahlul Bayt. At first, she served Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet. It was arranged by the Prophet that one day Fatimah would attend to the domestic duties while Fizzah would rest, and the following day Fizzah should work while Fatimah would rest.

After Fatimah's death, 'Ali married Fizzah to Abu Tha'labah al-Habashi. She bore him a son; and then Abu Tha'labah died. Later on Fizzah married Malik al-Ghatathani. One day Malik complained to 'Umar about Fizzah. 'Umar said, "A 'hair' from the family of Abu Talib is more learned than 'Adi."[84] ('Adi was 'Umar's tribe.)

Fizzah raised a family of her own; but her devotion to the Ahlul Bayt continued. She, on her own accord, accompanied Husayn to Karbala and shared the agonies and sufferings which the family of Imam Husayn had to endure.

Her knowledge of the holy book, the Qur'an, is renowned in the Muslim world. It is recorded that at least for the last twenty years of her life, she never uttered a single word except the Our' an, and always talked by reciting the verses of the Qur'an. One interesting piece of conversation is given here to illustrate her unique erudition:

Abu'l Qasim al-Qushayri quotes a reliable person that once he was left behind from his caravan and was travelling alone. In the desert, he saw a woman and asked who she was. The woman recited the verse of the Qur'an: "And *say 'salam',* and soon shall they know." (43:89) He realised his mistake and greeted her, and then asked, "What are you doing here?"

The woman: "And those whom God guides, there can be none to *lead (them) astray*."(39:37)

The man: "Are you a genie or a human-being?"

The woman: "O *children of Adam!* Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer."(7:31)

The man: "Where are you coming from?"

The woman: "They are being called *from a place far distant.* "(41:44)

The man: "Where are you going to?"

The woman: *"Pilgrimage to the House* (of God) is a duty men owe to God, those who can afford the journey."(3:97)

The man: "Since how many days have you been separated from your caravan?"

The woman: "We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in *six days.* "(50:38)

The man: "Do you want something to eat?"

The woman: *"Nor did He give them bodies that ate no food*"(21:8)

So he gave her some food. After that he told her to run quickly. She said, "*On no soul does God place a burden greater than it can bear.*"(2:286)

So he asked her to sit on the camel behind him. Came the answer: *"If there were,* in the heavens and the earth, *other gods besides God*, *there would have been chaos in both*" (2l:22). Hearing it, he came down from the camel and requested her to ride it. When she sat on it, she recited, *"Glory be to Him who has subjected this to our use, for we could never have accomplished this by ourselves.* "(43:13)

After sometime, they reached the caravan. He asked her if she had any relative of her in that caravan. She said, "*O Dawud!* We have indeed made you a vicegerent on earth; *Muhammad* is not but a prophet; O *Yahya* take hold of the book with might; *O Musa,* verily I am your Lord." (38:26, 3:144; 19:21; 20:11-12 respectively.)

He called these names, and saw four young men running towards him. Meanwhile he asked the woman what was their relationship with her. She recited, "Wealth and *sons* are adornments of the life of this world."(18:46). At that time her sons reached them; the mother told her sons, "O my father, *engage him on wages,* truly the best of men for your to employ is the man who is strong and trustworthy."(28:26) The sons gave him some remuneration for his trouble and service. But she thought it was not enough; so she said, " *God gives manifold increase* to whom He pleases."(2:261) So they increased some more. (These sons were most probably from Fizzah's second husband, Malik al-Ghatathani.)

That person asked the sons who she was. They informed him that she was Fizzah, the servant of Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet; and that since twenty years she has not spoken a signal word except the Qur'an.[85]

vii. Qambar

Qambar's name is often mentioned in the traditions. And he has been immortalised by the poetry lines of Imam 'Ali:

When I saw an unlawful thing,
1 kindled a fire and called Qambar.

Someone asked Qambar who was his master. Qambar described the virtues of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib in such a lucid and impressive manner that it has been recorded by the traditionists *ad verbatim*.[85] As justice cannot be done to it in translation, I am leaving that oration out. I have already said how lovingly Qambar was treated by Imam 'Ali. After the Imam's death, Qambar used to relate that very seldom did he have the occasion to serve his master because Imam 'Ali used to do his work by himself: he used to wash his own clothes, even mended them himself whenever needed; he would draw water from the well for his daily use; would give them good food and decent dress but would himself eat and dress like a poor man. His oft-used phrase with them was "go easy child".

Qambar used to say, "It was only once that he got annoyed with me. It was at the time when I showed him the money that I have 'hoarded.' It was from my share of the income given to me by others and gifts I had received from the members of his family. I had collected about hundred *dirhams*. When I showed him the amount, he looked angry, and what pained me most, he looked sad." Qambar inquired why he was so sad. He replied, "Qambar, if you had no use of the money, were there no people around you who needed the money? Some of them might have been starving, others might have been ill and infirm. Could you not have helped them? I never thought you could be so heartless, and could love wealth for the sake of wealth. Qambar, I am afraid you are not trying to acquire much from Islam; try more seriously and sincerely. Take the coins out of my house." Qambar immediately distributed the money amongst the poor and the needy. It might be added that Qambar had long been freed by Imam 'Ali, but he remained with him.

Hajjaj bin Yusuf al-Thaqafi, the governor of 'Abdul Malik bin Marwan in Iraq, was a tyrant who used to boast that, "The most tasteful thing to me in the world is shedding the blood." His name has become a proverb in tyranny. He killed 120,000 people whose only crime was their love for and devotion to 'Ali bin Abi Talib and the Ahlul Bayt. This number does not include those who were killed by him in the battles. He tried very hard to eliminate the Shi'ahs of 'Ali from Iraq. Sa'id bin Jubayr and Kumayl bin Ziyad were two of his victims.

Once Hajjaj asked, "Is there anybody left from the followers of Abu Turab [i.e., 'Ali] so that I may please Allah by killing him?" He was told that there was Qambar, his slave.

So Qambar, then a very old man, was captured and brought to him. Then the following talk took place between Hajjaj and Qambar:

Hajjaj: "Are you the slave of 'Ali?"

Qambar: "Allah is my Master and 'Ali is my benefactor."

Hajjaj: "What was your duty in the service of 'Ali."

Qambar: "I used to bring water for his ablution (*wuzu*)."

Hajjaj: "What was 'Ali reciting after finishing the *wuzu* ?"

Qambar: "He used to recite this verse: *'And when they forgot that which they had been admonished, He opened for them the door of all things (of enjoyment); until when they rejoiced in what they were given, We caught them suddenly, when, lo! they were in utter despair*.'[6:44]"

Hajjaj: "I suppose he meant us to be included in this verse?"

Qambar: "Yes."

Hajjaj: "You better leave the religion of 'Ali."

Qambar: "Before I leave his religion, tell me which religion is better than his."

Hajjaj: "What will you do if I cut your head?"

Qambar: "Then it will be good luck for me and bad luck for you."

In another tradition, this last question and answer have been recorded differently:

Hajjaj: "I surely intend to kill you. You better choose your own method of death."

Qambar: "It is up to you. Kill me in whatever way you like, because I kill you in the same way on the day of judgement. And, as a matter of fact, my master had told me that you would behead me."

Hajjaj ordered him to be beheaded. Qambar was martyred in the cause of his faith. Today his grave in Baghdad is the place of pilgrimage for thousands of pilgrims.[86]

viii. Sa'id

Sa'id, another slave of 'Ali bin Abi Talib, says that once on a very hot day, 'Ali was

very busy writing letters. He wanted to send Sa'id to call some of his officers. He called him once, twice and thrice, and each time Sa'id purposely kept silent and did not reply. The Imam then got up himself and saw Sa'id sitting not very far. He asked him why he did not respond to his call. Sa'id replied, "Sir, I wanted to find out when and how you would get angry." A smile appeared on 'Ali's lips and he told Sa'id that he could not rouse him to anger with those childish tricks. Imam 'Ali set him free, but continued to support him till his death

ix. Slaves: The Helpers Of The Faith

As the Prophet of Islam brought the message of universal brotherhood, it was inevitable that this message of emancipation of the human soul should have attracted the people of all races and creeds; but especially the oppressed groups. It was natural that the larger part of his early followers was made up of the slaves.

The reactionaries were horrified; in desperation, they began persecuting the newly-converted Muslims. Apart from those whose descriptions have already been given above, the following names deserve particular attention:

Suhayb bin Sinan

of Rome was a slave converted to Islam in its early days.[87] He was a skilled iron-smith, making fine coats of mail and swords. Thus, he accumulated a good fortune. After his conversion to Islam, he was also brutally tortured by the infidels.[88] When he wanted to migrate to Medina, the infidels pounced upon him and took every single *dirham* from his possession. Thus he arrived at Medina a destitute. He was entrusted by 'Umar, the second caliph, to lead people in prayers after his death till the next caliph was appointed.[89]

Khabbab bin al-Arratt

was a famous companion of the Prophet. He was the sixth man to accept Islam. He was from the continent of Africa; and suffered for the cause of truth.[90] He was among those who were known as "Shi'ahs (partisans) of 'Ali." His son, 'Abdullah together with all his family-members, was martyred by the Kharijites in 40 AH.[91]

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The greatest sacrifice in the cause of Islam was offered in Karbala in 61 AH by Imam Husayn and his companions. A group of about 120 souls faced the host of Yazid bin Mu'awiyah's army (not less than 30,000 in number). It is noteworthy that in that God-

loving, God-fearing group of 120 believers, about 16 were slaves or ex-slaves. They were as follows:

Shawdhab

, an African martyr; was one of the most respected scholars of Islamic laws and traditions. People used to travel from far to listen to his discourses.[92] On hearing Husayn's plight, Shawdhab and his ex-master (and now companion) 'Abis Shakiri joined him and fell on the battlefield of Karbala.

John bin Huwai

, of Ethiopia, was probably a convert from Christianity as his name suggests. He was a slave of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, the famous companion of the Prophet. After the death of Abu Dharr, he attached himself to the Ahlul Bayt who were looking after him. He accompanied Imam Husayn to Karbala, and although by this time an old man he tried to go to the battle-field to fight. Imam Husayn at first refused; but John persisted and, at last, the Imam allowed him to go to the battlefield. When he fell down, Imam Husayn went to his corpse, put his head on his lap, and asked God to illuminate the face of John. When people of the tribe of Asad came after three days to bury the martyrs, they were astonished to find a corpse which was shining with heavenly light and enveloped in heavenly perfume. It was John's corpse.

Salim, Zahir bin 'Amr, Qarib bin 'Abdullah Du'ali, Munjih bin Sahm, Sa'd bin Harth, Nasr bin Abi Naizar, Aslam bin 'Amr and Sulayman were among the victims of the "first attack" - an attempt made by the cavalry of Yazid to wipe out the little group of Husayn by overwhelming them with a powerful, fast and surprise attack. The Yazidites failed in their attempt because of the superiority of the defence technique of the Husaynites and their fierce devotion to him. The cavalry of Yazid retreated, leaving behind a large number of dead. But this victory was won by the followers of Imam Husayn with a heavy price. More than fifty companions of Husayn were lying on the battle-field; among them were the six above-mentioned brave slave martyrs. There were six other slaves who were martyred in Karbala. Their names are: Harth bin Nabhan, Sa'id, Nafi', Salim, Shabib and Wadih. Description is also found in histories of a Turkish slave of Imam Zaynul 'Abidin who fought the army of Yazid and gave his life in the cause of Islam.[93]

'Aqabah bin Sam'an

, also a slave, was one of the most trusted companions of Imam Husayn. The Imam left all his important documents in his custody. In modem terminology, way may say

that he was a secretary of Imam Husayn. He was wounded in the battle of Karbala and taken prisoner along with Imam Husayn's family. Being one of the eye-witnesses of the massacre of Karbala, 'Aqabah bin Sam'an's chronicle is a valuable source of history. Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, the famous Muslim historian, has recorded 'Aqabah's chronicle in his *Ta'rikh al-umam wa al-muluk*. That chronicle was separated from al-Tabari's *Ta'rikh* and published in India with the notes by late Mujtaba Husayn Kamunpuri of Aligarh Muslim University.

Muslims have always been proud of the sacrifices offered by the martyrs of Karbala for the cause of Islam. The descendants of Imam Husayn always offered their salutations to them, some times name by name, sometimes jointly. The Shi'ah Ithna 'Asharis, following their Imams, always salute these martyrs in the following term, almost everyday:-

Salutation to you, O saints of Allah and His beloved ones;
Salutations to you, O chosen ones of Allah and His dear ones;
Salutations to you, O helpers of the Faith;
May my parents have the privilege of laying down their lives for you, Pure and clean were you, and pure and clean became the earth in which you were buried;
you have indeed achieved the greatest success;
I wish to Allah that I were there with you to share the success.[94]

x. Slaves' Children: Imams and Caliphs

From its advent until the rise of the Umayyads, Islam had achieved a marked degree of success in its benign war against slavery. Slaves were no longer sub-human animals, but men and women of dignity and respect. Many a freed slave rose to high ranks. The descendants of the Prophet and their followers continued the Islamic attitude towards slavery. A number of Imams married slave-women who became mothers of Imams.

The Kaysaniyyah sect believed Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah (a son of Imam 'Ali) to be the Imam after Imam Husayn. Muhammad al-Hanafiyyah's mother Khawla bint Ja'far bin Qays was a captive whom 'Ali married. But nobody ever suggested that being born of a captive girl was a snag in the belief of the Kaysaniyyah.

Likewise, Zaydiyyah sect believes that the Imam, after Imam Zaynul 'Abidin, was his son Zayd who was born of a Sindhi slave-girl, named Huriya.

Even Shahr Banu, daughter of Yazd Jurd (the last emperor of Iran) who was married to Imam Husayn and was mother of Imam Zaynul 'Abidin, had come to Arabia as a captive. Still her personal virtues earned her the title of "chief of the ladies".

Hamidah Khatun, mother of Imam Musa al-Kazim was a slave-girl from Berber. She is renowned for her knowledge and piety. She was called Hamidah the Pure. Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq used to send the women to learn the tenets of religion from her and used to say that "Hamidah is pure from every impurity like the ingot of pure gold."

The mother of Imam 'Ali al-Riza also was a slave-girl from Maghrib (North-West Africa). Her name was Taktum (or Najma) and she was known as Tahirah, the purified one. She was renowned for her piety and knowledge.

Imam Muhammad al-Taqi was son of Sabikah, commonly known as Khayzuran, a slave-girl from Nuba. Imam Musa al-Kazim had told Yazid bin Sabt to convey his *salams* to Sabikah. She is referred to in the traditions as Tayyibah.

Imam 'Ali al-Naqi's mother, Sammanah, of Maghrib, was a slave, but she was called "Sayyidah" (chief of the ladies). She had no equal in piety, and love and fear of Allah. She fasted nearly the whole year. Imam 'Ali al-Naqi told her that she was protected by Allah and was foremost amongst the mothers of *siddiqin* and *salihin* - the truthful and virtuous people.

Imam Hasan al-'Askari was also born of a slave-girl, Hudayth (or Salil). To show her high prestige among the Shi' ahs, it is enough to say that after the death of Imam Hasan al-'Askari she was the central figure of Shi'ism around whom the whole community gathered and she guided them in the best possible way. The Shi'ahs referred to her as "Jaddah", the grandmother.

Narjis Khatun, the mother of our 12th and present Imam, was a princess of the Byzantine empire. But she also had reached to Imam Hasan al-'Askari as a slave.

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This much will suffice on the spiritual side. Coming to the politics, we see countless slaves in highest responsible posts, including the command of armies, governorship and judgeship. Not only in administration, we find theologians, commentators of the Qur'an, traditionists, jurists and authors who either were slaves or the children of the slaves or ex-slaves. Except for the first, third, fourth and fifth caliphs, all the 'Abbasid caliphs were born from slave women, the famous al-Mansur (the 2nd caliph) being the first of them whose mother, Salamah, was a slave from Berber. Then beginning from Ma'mun al-Rashid (the 6th caliph) up to the last all were sons of slave-girls.

Here are the names of those caliphs and of their slave mothers:-

1. Ma'mun al-Rashid: Murajil, a black slave-girl.
2. Mu'tasim Billah: a slave-girl from Kufah, named Maridah.
3. Wathiq Billah: a Roman named Qaratis.
4. Mutawakkil 'Allallah: son of Shuja.
5. Muntasir Billah: a Roman named Habashiyyah.
6. Musta'in Billah: Mukhariq.
7. Mu'tazz Billah: a Roman named Qabihah.
8. Muhtadi Billah: Wards, or Qurb.
9. Mu'tamid 'Alallah: a Roman named Fityan.
10. Mu'tazid Billah: Sawab (or Hirz or Dhirar).
11. Muktafi Billah: a Turkish slave-girl named Jijaq or Khudi.
12. Muqtadir Billah: a Roman or Turkish slave-girl called Gharib or Shaghab.
13. Qahir Billah: Fitnah.
14. Radhi Billah: a Roman, Zalum.
15. Muttaqi Lillah: Khalub or Zuhra.
16. Mustakfi Billah: Awjahun Naa or Ghusn.
17. Muti' Lillah: Mash'alah.
18. Atta'i Lillah: Hazar or Atab.
19. Qadir Billah: Dumanah or Tamanni.
20. Qa'im Billah: an Armenian called Badrudduja or Qatrunnada.
21. Muqtadi Bi Amrillah: Arjwan.

22. Mustazhir Billah: a slave (name not recorded).
23. Mustarshid Billah: a slave (name not recorded).
24. Rashid Billah: a slave (name not recorded).
25. Muqtafi Li Amrillah: an Ethiopian slave-girl.
26. Mustanjid Billah: a Karjiyya slave named Ta'us.
27. Mustadi' Bi Amrillah: an Armenian named Ghaddha.
28. Nasir Li Dinillah: a Turkish slave, Zamurrad.
29. Zahir Bi Amrillah~: Name not recorded.
30. Munstansir Billah: a Turkish slave (name not recorded).
31. Musta'sim Billah: Hajir.[95]

Even as late as the Ottoman Turkish Empire, the royal family may rightly be included in the slave-family because the mothers of the Sultan's children were slaves. The Sultan himself was a son of a slave. Long before Sulayman's time, the Sultan had practically ceased either to obtain a bride of royal ranks or give title of wife to the mothers of their children. The Ottoman system deliberately took slaves and made them ministers of state. It took boys from the sheep-run and the plough tail and made them courtiers and the husbands of princesses, it took young men of land whose ancestors had borne the christian names for centuries, and made them rulers in the greatest of Muslim states.

Throughout the Muslim history, we find slaves rising not only to administrative posts but to the kingship as well. In the words of Will Durant, "It is astonishing how many sons of slaves rose to high place in the intellectual and political world of Islam, how many, like Mahmud and the early Mameluks, became kings."[96] Subuktagin of Ghazni and his son, Mahmud (the famous warrior king who attacked India seventeen times), were slaves and son of slave respectively. The first Muslim dynasty of India was also found by slaves, and is still known as the slave dynasty.

Before closing this chapter, I must emphasise one point: All those slaves or children of slaves who reached the height of prestige spiritually or politically - did so *neither*

because of nor in spite of being slaves or children of slaves; they reached there because they were Muslims who had abilities. Their status of slavery or ex-slavery neither enhanced nor decreased the chances of their success; it neither facilitated nor hindered their pursuit to reach their goal of life. Muslim society, thanks to the strict injunctions of Islam and Prophet Muhammad, was colour-blind and status-blind. The only thing that mattered was the ability which a man or woman had.

This achievement, effected 1400 years ago, is a far cry from the blatant failure of Christianity in this 1960's where, in Christian U.S.A. if a Negro becomes a mayor it is considered a big news; and where in 1971 the Government planned to promote its first black admiral, a certain Captain Samual Lee Gravely.

You see the implication of this news. Someone from the Negroes is to be selected on political grounds *because* he is a Negro. Had it been solely on his personal records, the name would not have been a matter of speculation! Such kind of racialism and snobbery was, and still is, unthinkable in Islam. Thus, it is clear that Islam succeeded where every other religion and system has failed so far. Islam absorbed the slaves in Muslim society without any regard of their colour or origin. Judging on its own records, we cannot but admire the tremendous success of Islam in this field.

Notes:

[26]. al-Majlisi, M.B., *Hayatul Qulub*, vol. II (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-e Islamia, 1371 AH), pp. 562-3; Abu Na'im Ahmad al-Isfahani, *Hilyatul Awliya*, vol. I (Beirut, 1967), pp. 146-7.

[27]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. IV:1, p. 58.

[28]. al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*; vol. 22 (Tehran, n.d.), p. 355; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 193-5; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz's-Sahabah*, vol. 3 (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1853-88), p. 224.

[29]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. II:1, p.47.

[30]. al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, vol. 20, pp. 189, 198; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. IV:1, p. 59, vol. VII:2, p. 65.

[31]. al-Majlisi, *Bihar*; vol. 22, p. 348.

[32]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, pp. 330, 391; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. IV:1, p. 61; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 187.

[33]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, p. 331.

[34.] *Ibid*, p. 349.

[35]. *Ibid*, p. 346.

[36]. *Ibid*, p. 327, 349.

[37]. *Ibid*, p. 347.

[38]. *Ibid*, p. 319; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. IV:1, p. 61; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 187.

[39]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, p. 342.

[40]. *Ibid*, p. 321.

[41]. *Ibid*, p. 325; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 190.

[42]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, p. 327.

[43]. *Ibid*, p. 381.

[44]. *Ibid*, p. 374.

[45]. *Ibid*, pp. 372, 380.

[46]. Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 45.

[47]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, pp. 314, 318; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol.III:1, p. 28; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 45-6.

[48]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 29; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 600.

[49]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 31; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 46, vol. 7, p. 600.

[50]. al-Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, 3rd ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: 1974), p. 195.

[51]. al-'Amili, *op. cit.*, vol. 14, p. 43; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. VIII:1, p. 71.

[52]. al-Majlisi, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, p. 187; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 600.

[53]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 32; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 47.

[54]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. II:2, pp. 41-2; vol. IV:1, pp.46-7.

[55]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 179; Ibn Athir, *Usdu '1-Ghabah fi Ma'rifati's-Sahabah*, vol. 4 (Egypt, n.d.), p. 461; Ibn Kathir, *al-Tar'ikh*, vol. 7 (Egypt, n.d.), p. 311.

[56]. *Ibid*.

[57]. *Ibid*, vol, III:1, p. 176.

[58]. *Ibid*, vol. III:1, p. 177; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 140.

[59]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 178; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol.1, p. 140; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol.3, p. 1219.

[60]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 178; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 1220.

[61]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, pp. 177, 180; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 1220; al-Bukhari, *al-Sahih*, vol. 8 (Egypt ed.) pp. 185-186; al-Tirmidhi, *al-Jami' al-Sahih*, vol. 5 (Egypt ed.) p. 669; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 2 (Egypt ed.) pp. 161, 164, 206, vol. 3, pp. 5, 22, 28, 91, vol. 4, pp. 197, 199, vol. 5, pp. 215, 306, 307, vol. 6, pp. 289, 300, 311, 315; Ibn 'Abdi '1-Barr, *al-Isti'ab fi Ma'rifat'l-Ashab*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

[62]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 187; Hakim, *al-Mustadrak 'ala 's-Sahihayn*, vol. 3 (Hyderabad ed.) p. 392; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah*, vol.2 (Egypt ed., n.d.) p. 143; Ibn Kathir, *al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 7, pp. 268, 270.

[63]. Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 139; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 1219; Ibn Majah, *al-Sunan*, vol. 1 (Egypt ed. n.d.) p. 65; al-Haythami, *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, vol. 9 (Egypt ed. n.d.) p. 295; Ibn 'Abdu'1-Barr, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 1137.

[64]. al-Baladhuri, *Ansabu'l Ashraf*, vol. 5, pp. 48, 54, 88; Ibn Abi '1-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 3, p. 47; Ibn Qutaybah, *al-Imamah wa 's-Siyasah*, vol. 1, pp. 35-6; Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *al-'Iqdu 'l-Farid*, vol. 4 (Egypt ed.) p. 307; Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 185; al-Diyarbakri; *Tarikhu'l-Khamis*, vol. 2, p. 271.

[65]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, pp. 184-5; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol.1, p.141.

[66]. Qummi, 'Abbas, *Muntaha'l-Amal*, vol. 1 (Tehran: 1381 AH) p. 92.

[67]. al-Tabari, *al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 1, pp. 3316-3322; vol. 3, pp. 2314-2319; Ibn Athir, *al-Kamil*,

vol. 3, pp. 308-312; Ibn Kathir, *al-Ta'rikh*, vol. 7, pp. 267-272.

[68]. al-Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshad*, trans. I.K.A. Howard (London: Muhammadi Trust) pp. 243-244; and al-Kashshi's *Rijal* as quoted by Qummi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 157.

[69]. Qummi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 157.

[70]. Kashshi, *Rijal*, as quoted by Qummi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 143-4.

[71]. Qummi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 157; al-Mufid, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

[72]. *Ibid*.

[73]. *Ibid*.

[74]. *Ibid*.

[75]. *Ibid*.

[76]. *Ibid*, pp. 158-9.

[77]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III: 1, p. 170; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 336.

[78]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 166; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 148; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 336.

[79]. *Ibid*, p. 167.

[80]. al-Majlisi, *Hayatu'l Qulub*, pp. 129-130; *Bihar*, vol. 16, p. 295.

[81]. Shustari, Nurullah, *Majalisu'1-Mu'minin* (Tehran, 1268 AH) p. 54; and also see Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 169.

[82]. Shushtari, *op. cit.*; also see Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 150.

[83]. Shushtari, *op. cit.*, p. 54; and also see Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p.170; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol.1, pp.336-337.

[84]. Shubbar, S. 'Abdullah, *Masabihul Anwar*, vol. 2 (Najaf: Matba'ah al-'Ilmiyyah, 1952/1371) p. 425-6 quoting *Manaqib* of Ibn Shahr Ashub.

[85]. Majlisi, *Bihar*, vol. 43 (Beirut, 1983/1403) p. 86-7; Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib *Aal Abi Talib*, vol. 4 (Bombay, 1313 AH) p. 15.

[86]. Kashshi, *Rijal* as quoted by Qummi, *op. cit.*, vol.1, p. 153.

[87]. Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 153; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 514.

[88]. Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 514.

[89]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, pp. 161-4; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 516.

[90]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 116-7; Abu Na'im, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 144.

[91]. Ibn Sa'd, *op. cit.*, vol. III:1, p. 21; Ibn Hajar, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 739.

[92]. Qummi, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 266.

[93]. For more information on Imam Husayn and Karbala, see Rizvi, S.M., ed., *Imam Husayn, the Saviour of Islam*, (Vancouver: 1984).

[94]. Qummi, *Mafatihu'l-Jinan* (Tehran, n.d.) p. 427.

[95]. See relevant chapters of Muhammad Khawind Shah's *Rawdatu 's-Safa*; also Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Undulusi, *al-'Iqdu'l-Farid*, vol. 5 (Beirut: 1983) pp. 113-131.

[96]. Durant, W., *The Story of Civilization*, vol. 4, p. 209.

The Origin of Negro Slavery

Now that we have seen the attitude of Islam towards slavery, let us have a look at Christianity and its followers, and see what they did in this respect.

It is surprising to see that Christians, who for the reasons of their own, now-a-days pose themselves as champions of human freedom, were the most outspoken advocates of the system of slavery. They invented philosophical and moral justifications for enslaving the "uncivilised" people. One of their arguments was they were saving them from their cannibal neighbours in this world, and from eternal disgrace in the life hereafter.

Islam and its followers never thought on these lines. The vast multitude of Islamic literature is empty from this kind of pathetic effort at moralisation. But the Christian writers always mention slave-trade as though they had nothing to do with it and that it was Islam which "encouraged and legalised slavery" while they, the Christians, had always tried to abolish this nefarious system!

It is interesting to note that when speaking about the West African totally Christian slave-trade, the Christian writers and historians call it "West African slave-trade" or "Atlantic slave-trade"; but when they turn to Eastern Africa, the term changes to "Arab slave-trade".

Christianity, by such false propaganda, has succeeded to a great extent in extending its influence among those Africans whom its propaganda machinery has kept blissfully unaware of the fact that all Christian churches were active participants in African slave-trade. The following chapters will present the true picture for the readers.

"When in 1492 Columbus, representing the Spanish monarchy, discovered the New World, he sent in train the long and bitter international rivalry over colonial possessions for which, after four and a half centuries, no solution has yet been found. Portugal, which had initiated the movement of international expansion, claimed the new territories on the ground that they fell within the scope of a papal bull of 1455 authorising her to reduce to servitude all infidel people. The two powers, to avoid controversy, sought arbitration and, as Catholics, turned to the Pope - a natural and logical step in an age when the universal claims of the Papacy were still unchallenged by individuals and governments. After carefully sifting the rival claims, the

Pope issued in 1493, a series of papal bulls which established a line of demarcation between the colonial possessions of the two states: the East went to Portugal and the West to Spain. The partitions, however; failed to satisfy the Portuguese aspirations and in the subsequent year the contending parties reached a more satisfactory compromise in the Treaty of Tordesillas, which rectified the papal judgement to permit Portuguese ownership of Brazil."[1]

But this arbitration could not bind other powers aspiring to grab as many countries as possible; England, France and even Holland began to claim their places in the sun. The Negro, too, "was to have his place, though he did not ask for it: it was the broiling sun of the sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations of the New World.

"According to Adam Smith, the prosperity of a new colony depends upon one simple economic factor - 'plenty of good land.' The British colonial possession up to 1776, however, can broadly be divided into two types. The first is the self-sufficient and diversified economy of small farmers... The second type is the colony which has facilities for the production of staple articles on a large scale for an export market. In the first category fell the Northern colonies of the American mainland; in the second, the tobacco colonies and sugar islands of the Caribbean. In colonies of the latter type, as Merivale pointed out land and capital were both useless unless labour could be commanded. Labour, that is, must be constant and must work, or be made to work, in co-operation.. Without this compulsion, the labourer would otherwise exercise his natural inclination to work his own land and toil on his own account. The story is frequently told of the great English capitalist, Mr. Pell, who took 50,000 pounds and three hundred labourers with him to the Swan River colony in Australia. His plan was that his labourers would work for him, as in the old country. Arrived in Australia, however, where land was plentiful - too plentiful - the labourers preferred to work for themselves as small proprietors, rather than under the capitalist for wages. Australia was not England, and the capitalist was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water."[2]

Thus the ideal solution was slavery.

"'Odious resource', though it might be, as Merivalle called it, slavery was an economic institution of the first importance. It had been the basis of Greek economy and had built up the Roman Empire. In modem times it provided the sugar for the tea and the coffee cups of the Western world. It produced the cotton to serve as base for modern capitalism. It made the American South and the Caribbean islands."[3]

"With the limited population of Europe in the sixteenth century, the free labourers necessary to cultivate the staple cops of sugar, tobacco and cotton in the New World could not have been supplied in quantities adequate to permit large-scale production. Slavery was necessary for this and to get slaves the Europeans turned first to the aborigines."[4]

"But Indian slavery never was extensive in the British dominions... In the case of the Indian ... slavery was viewed as of an occasional nature, a preventive penalty and not as normal and permanent condition. In the New England colonies Indian slavery was unprofitable, for slavery of any kind was unprofitable because it was unsuited to the diversified agriculture of these colonies. In addition the Indian slave was inefficient. The Spaniards discovered that one Negro was worth four Indians. A prominent official in Hispanolia insisted in 1581 that 'permission be given to bring Negroes, a race robust for labour instead of natives so weak that they can only be employed in tasks requiring little endurance such as taking care of maize fields or farms.... The future staples of the New World, sugar and cotton, required strength which the Indians lacked, and demanded the robust 'cotton nigger' as sugar's need of strong mules produced in Louisiana the epithet 'sugar mules.' According to Lauber, 'when compared with sums paid for Negroes at the same time and place the prices of Indian slaves are found to have been considerably lower.'

"The Indian reservoir, too, was limited, the African inexhaustible. Negroes therefore were stolen in Africa to work the lands stolen from the Indians in America. The voyages of Prince Henry the Navigator complemented those of Columbus, West African history became the complement of West Indians."[5]

Notes:

[1]. Williams, Dr. Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London, 1964) p. 4.

[2]. *Ibid,* pp. 4-5.

[3]. *Ibid,* p. 5.

[4]. *Ibid*, p. 6.

[5]. *Ibid,* pp. 8-9.

Christians Organise Slave-Trade

Slaves were taken from Africa even during the Roman Empire, but the real "slave-trade" started in 16th century with the advent of the Christian European countries.

Edward A. Alpers of the University College of Dar-es-salaam, writes that "as we draw a distinction between the incidental trade in slaves which trickled across the Sahara from West to North Africa as long as the days of the Roman Empire, on the one hand, and the phenomenon which we call the West African slave-trade, on the other hand, so we must draw a similar distinction for East Africa."[6]

Walter Rodney also of University College, Dar-es-salaam, begins his booklet *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave-Trade* with the following words: "It must always be remembered that the Atlantic slave-trade was an event in world history, involving three continents - Europe, Africa and America. The people who set out to seek slaves were Europeans coming from every country between Sweden in the north and Portugal in the south. The Portuguese arrived in West Africa shortly before the middle of the fifteenth century. Immediately, they started seizing the Africans and taking them to work as slaves in Europe, particularly in Portugal and Spain. But the most important developments took place in the sixteenth century, when Europeans capitalists realised that they could make enormous profits by using the labour of Africans to exploit the wealth of the Americas. As a result, Africans were taken to North America, Central America, South America and the Caribbean to provide slave-labour in gold and silver mines and on agricultural plantations growing crops of sugar, cotton and tobacco. This notorious commerce in human beings lasted altogether for more than four hundred years, since the Atlantic slave-trade did not come to end until the late 1870's.

"Much can be said about the way that the Atlantic slave-trade was organised in Europe, and about the vast profits made by countries such as England and France. A lot can also be said about the terrible journey from Africa to America across the Atlantic ocean. Africans were packed like sardines on the slave-ships, and consequently died in great numbers."[7]

And what a sardine! For details of these packing, read the following:

> One of the most chilling of all the appalling documents is 'The Plan of the Brookes', a notorious eighteenth-century scheme for stacking slaves into the slave-ship 'Brookes'...By a precise mathematical calculation, the technology of horror is laid out - feet and inches, standing room and breathing space assigned with lethal concern for maximum profit. A Mr. Jones recommends that 'five females be reckoned as four males, and three boys or girls as equal to two grown persons. ..every man slave is to he allowed six feet by one foot four inches for room, every woman five feet ten by one foot four...', and so it continues until every scrap of flesh is accommodated - 451 in number. But an Act of Parliament allows for 454. So the document concludes that, 'if three more could be wedged among the number represented in the plan, this plan would contain precisely the number which the act directs.'[8]

Once the Africans landed on the other side of the Atlantic, they were really in a "New World", full of oppression and brutality. The following revelations may be helpful in understanding the situation prevailing at that time. Rodney writes:

"From the time of the arrival of the [Christian] Europeans until 1600, about one million Africans were carried away in slave-ships. During that period, the Portuguese were the chief slave-traders in West Africa. They either took Africans to Brazil, which they owned, or else they sold them to the Spanish settlers in Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean Islands. In the seventeenth century, some seven to eight million West Africans found their way across the Atlantic. The Dutch joined the Portuguese as the leading slave-traders in the seventeenth century, and in the following century the British were the biggest slave-traders. By the time that the Atlantic slave-trade was at its height in the eighteenth century, British ships were carrying more than half of the total of slaves, leaving the rest to be divided up between the Dutch, the French, the Portuguese and the Danes.

"By the nineteenth century, there was another change of the people who took the leading role in exploiting Africa. The European countries themselves were not as active in the slave-trade, but instead Europeans who had settled in Brazil, Cuba and North America were the ones who organised a large part of the trade. The Americans had recently gained their independence from Britain, and it was the new nation of the United States of America which played the biggest part in the last fifty years of the Atlantic slave-trade, taking away slaves at a greater rate than ever before.

"When the Atlantic slave-trade began on the West African coast, it took the form of directed attacks by Europeans on Africans living near the shore. When the first Portuguese sailors reached the coast of what is Mauritania, they left their ships and hunted the Moors who lived in that region. In reality, this was not trade at all - it was violent aggression. However, after being surprised on a few occasions, the Africans on the coast naturally kept watch for their European attackers and defended themselves vigorously. Within a very short while, the Portuguese came to realise that raiding was a very unsafe manner of trying to obtain slaves.

Besides, they also wanted gold and other African commodities, which they could acquire only by trading peacefully. So instead of raiding, the Portuguese considered offering the manufactured goods in order to encourage the Africans to exchange local products and to bring African captive to the European ships. Not only the Portuguese, but all other Europeans found that from their point of view this was the best way to obtain goods in Africa; and it was in this way that they laid their hands on so many million Africans."[9]

Commenting on this aspect of the slave-trade the writer says that, "One of the most important things is to recognise the very painful and unpleasant fact that there were Africans who aided and partnered the Europeans in enslaving other Africans. It means that we cannot take the simple attitude that the whites were the villains and blacks were the victims. A useful parallel which would help in the understanding of what took place in West Africa during the centuries of slave-trading can be found in Africa today, where many leaders join with the European and American imperialists to exploit the great majority of the African people.

"In the long run, West Africans were reduced to the state of 'sell or be sold'. Here the question of firearms was particularly important. To be strong, a state needed firearms, but to get firearms from the Europeans, the Africans had to offer slaves. African rulers found themselves selling slaves to get guns to catch slaves to buy more guns. This can be described as a 'vicious circle'. It does not entirely excuse the African rulers who helped the Europeans, but it explains how in the end they were not so much the partners of the Europeans but rather their servants or lackeys."[10]

And what was the church doing all that time? Hear the same author commenting: "Because there was so much profit to be made by taking slaves from Africa, Europeans refused to listen to their consciences. They knew about the suffering that was inflicted upon people in Africa, on the slave-ships and on the slave-plantations of the Americas, and they were aware that to sell their fellow human beings could not be morally justified. Yet the Christian church came forward with excuses for the slave-trade. Many priests themselves carried on slave-trading, especially in Angola, and many others owned slaves in the Americas. The only reason the Catholic Church could give for its actions was that it was trying to save African souls by baptising the slaves. The Protestants were worse, for they did not even make it clear that they accepted that the Africans had a soul. Instead, they supported the view that African slave was a piece of property like furniture or a domestic animal. There is no part of the history of the Christian church which was more disgraceful than its support of the Atlantic slave-trade. "[11]

According to the Lloyd's List, slaves were most decidedly considered to be a cargo, and very precious. Policies taken out at Lloyd's insured slaves for as much as 45 pounds each - a considerable sum in early 18th century England.

To prevent them escaping, or to punish them, extraordinary devices such as shown here were

used both in West Africa and the West Indies.[12]

There were always a few individuals who protested against the Atlantic slave-trade right from the beginning; but governments and traders paid no attention to them during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was not until the late eighteenth century that serious attempts were made to put a stop to this trade.

James Boswell, trying to refute the arguments of abolitionists, writes in his *Life of Johnson* that, "The wild and dangerous attempt which has for some time been persisted in order to obtain an act of our legislature, to abolish so very important and necessary branch of commercial interest, must have been crused at once, had not the insignificance of the zealots who vainly took the lead in it, made the vast body of Planters, Merchants, and others, whose immense properties are involved in that trade, reasonably enough suppose that there could be no danger. The encouragement which the attempt has received excites my wonder and indignation; and though some men of superior abilities have supported it, whether from a love of temporary popularity, when prosperous; or a love of general mischief, when desperate, my opinion is unshaken. To abolish a status which in all ages GOD has sanctioned, and man has continued, would not only be robbery to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects; but it would be extreme cruelty to the African Savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre, or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life; especially now when their passage to the West Indies and their treatment there is humanely regulated. To abolish that trade would be to shut the gates of mercy on mankind."[13] The humanely regulated treatment and mercy shows itself in the details and diagrams given above!

Notes:

[6]. Alpers, Edward A., *East African Slave-Trade* (Dar-es-salaam: The Historical Association of Tanzania, 1967), p. (?)

[7]. Rodney, Walter., *West African and the Atlantic Slave-Trade* (Dar-es-salaam: The Historical Association of Tanzania, 1967) p. (?)

[8]. *Newsweek* (March 15, 1965) p. 106.

[9]. Rodney, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

[10]. *Ibid*, p. 7f.

[11]. *Ibid,* p. 22.

[12]. *Lloyd's List, 250th Anniversary Special (1734-1984),* April 17, 1984, London, p.149.

[13]. Boswell, J., *Life of Johnson* (N.Y.: Modern Library Edition, 1965) p. 365.

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East African Slave-Trade

Like West Africa, the slave-trade in East Africa became prominent and was firmly established with the advance and endeavour of the Christian Europe.

Mr. E.A. Alpers writes in *African Slave-Trade*: "Further evidence that the slave trade was by no means prominent in East Africa before the eighteenth century comes from the Portuguese. Surely the Portuguese, as the pioneers of the Atlantic slave-trade, would have tried to exploit the slave-trade in East Africa had they found it to be already flourishing. But the early Portuguese chroniclers only mention the slave-trade in passing. Much more important were the gold and ivory traders to Arabia and India. It is to these products that the Portuguese invaders turned their attention throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not only along the coast of Kenya and Tanzania, but also Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Even wax and ambergris seem to have been more important than slaves during most of this period. For unlike the colonialist in the Americas, the Portuguese never developed any sort of plantation economy in India. The Portuguese slave-trade from Mozambique to India rarely reached as many as one thousand individuals in any one year, and was usually less than half that number. That to Brazil was illegal until 1645 and was never seriously pursued until the beginning of the nineteenth century. As late as 1753, when the foundations of the new slave-trade in East Africa were being laid, there was grand total of only 4,399 African slaves in the whole of Portuguese India.

"What were these foundations? Despite the long Arab contact with East Africa, and their

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could to encourage the slave-trade with the French. According to official figures, more than 1,000 slaves were being exported each year. French, smuggling to avoid the taxes which were levied at Mozambique, probably raised the annual figure to at least 1,500. A similar figure was probably taken away from Ibo during this decade. Henceforth the Portuguese at Mozambique and Ibo (and later at Quelimane, near the mouth of the Zambezi River) were committed to a policy of slaving from which there was no turning back until abolition.

"The trade became much brisker in the eighties, especially after the conclusion of the American war of independence. During the seventies a few adventurous French slavers had taken cargoes from Mozambique to the West Indies, because they were finding it increasingly unprofitable to seek their chattels along the Guinea coast. Now, in peacetime, with greater competition for slaves in West Africa, the way was opened for a massive expansion of the American slave trade from East Africa. At the same time Portuguese vessels also began to take an active, though still secondary, part in the trade to the Mascarene Island. Official figures from Mozambique alone show that from 1781 through 1794 a total of 46,461 slaves were embarked on Portuguese and foreign ships, nearly all of which were French. Allowing for a minimum amount of smuggling, at least 4,000 slaves annually must have been leaving the Mozambique area during this period."[14]

It was this juncture that Arabs extended a helping hand to these Christian Slave-traders. The same author says, "After the Omani Arabs had responded to the call of some of the Swahili rulers of the coastal towns and with their help had in 1698 evicted the Portuguese from Mombassa and other outposts, they were themselves too weak to do more than disturb and rob the very people who had sought their aid. ..But after the Busaid family overthrew the Yorubi and established their rule in Oman in about 1744, they were able to begin effective economic exploitation of the people of East Africa. Like all previous merchants on the coast they were primarily interested in ivory, but from this point we can also detect a steady increase in the slave-trade.

"There are not, however, any accurate statistics on the volume of the Arab slave trade in the eighteenth century. The first indication which exists come from a French slaver named Jean-Vincent Morice, who traded at both Zanzibar and Kilwa, which was the most important slave port on the coast, in the 1770's. On the 14th September, 1776, Morice made a treaty with Sultan of Kilwa for the annual purchase of at the least 1,000 slaves. In three trips to Zanzibar and Kilwa before signing this treaty, he had bought 2,325 slaves for export. Morice does not tell us how many slaves the Arabs were taking away from the coast each year, but he clearly considered it to be a big business by French standards. It seems reasonable to suggest that at least 2,000 slaves a year were involved in the Arab trade at this time. So although the French did not dominate the slave-trade here as they did at Mozambique, they acted as an important stimulus to the demand of slaves at a period when the Arab trade was still out-growing its infancy. French efforts continued through the 1780's, but by the end of the century these probably had become much less important than the Arab trade.

"Several new factors gave rise to the increased demand for slaves from East Africa during the nineteenth century. In the Portuguese coastal sphere of influence there was a sharp upswing in the slave-trade to Brazil. This was caused by the removal of the Portuguese royal family from Lisbon to Brazil during the Napoleonic Wars. Special concessions were granted to the Brazilians and soon a flourishing trade in slaves was being carried on around the Cape of

Good Hope at Mozambique."[15]

"It is now an accepted fact among serious historians of East Africa that long distance trade routes between the interior and the coast were established exclusively through African initiative. In other words trade routes were forged by Africans from the interior going to the coast, not by the Arabs, or the Swahili, setting off from the coast into the unknown, hostile interior. Swahili traders only began to forsake the security of the coast in the second half of the eighteenth century, and travelled along well-established routes which had been developed decades before. Only after the nineteenth century was underway did Arab traders dare follow this lead.'"[16]

"The Yao who were to become the most dedicated African slave-traders in East Africa, thus had a long tradition of carrying ivory and other legitimate goods to the coast decades before the combined French and Arab demand for slaves began to come into play."[17]

"In West Africa these routes were driven inland from the coast by Africans who were primarily seeking slaves. Slaves dominated the West African trade from the first. In East Africa neither of these conditions was matched. The slave-trade must be seen in the context of earlier, well-established, and profitable long distance trade which was based overwhelmingly on ivory. This is particularly important to remember for the southern region which was always the main reservoir for the East African slave-trade."[18]

Mr. Alpers concludes, "It should be clear by now that the old stereotyped idea that most slaves were seized by marauding bands of Arabs and Swahili traders is just another one of the myths which have grown up around the East African slave-trade. But we must not make a mistake by underestimating the role which these individuals played in this business."[19]

Once again, I should emphasise that my aim is not to ridicule the efforts of a handful of moralists who were engaged in the propaganda against slavery. What I want to show is that their efforts did not (and could not) succeed until the economic pressure forced Britain first to restrict slave-trade and then abolish slavery.

Of course, when Britain set out to abolish slavery it could not proclaim from the roof-tops that it was abolishing it to compete against French industrialists. It had to turn it into a moral and ethical issue before it could hope to pressure other governments to follow suit. And so it did. We know how Britain waged wars not to protect its economic and political empire, but "to protect the Freedom of People." The same was the case with its war against slavery. Morality and ethics was an issue for a handful of impotent moralists only. The real issue, so far as the governments and the settlers and colonialists were concerned, was economy.

Notes:

[14]. Alpers, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

[15]. *Ibid,* pp. 7-8.

[16]. *Ibid,* p. 13.

[17]. *Ibid,* p. 14.

[18]. *Ibid,* p. 15.

[19]. *Ibid,* p. 24.

Sufferings of Slaves

We have already seen what Islam did achieve in alleviating the plight of the slaves and how, for the first and last time in the history, slaves were regarded as human beings having rights upon their masters. Now let us see how the Christians treated their slaves.

Before giving the description, I must make one point clear. These accounts are of the plight of the slaves during the last five centuries when, as mentioned earlier, the Christians started slave-trade on a previously unimaginable scale. As I have shown in the last chapter, the Arabs also gave them a willing helping hand in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

As most of the European accounts of the slave-trade in Africa date from this period, so there are many vivid descriptions of what men saw there. Thus, the Christians must bear the responsibility of these horrors in a far greater degree. They were inflicting these injuries for four centuries compared with one century in which the Arabs joined hands with them on their instigation though quite willingly.

The victims were the poor and defenceless Africans, the Negroes of the west and east coast of Africa and also of the interior of that continent. They were treated as mere chattels and tools or even worse. They had to work or rather they were forced to work in inhuman conditions on the newly acquired plantations of their masters, the Christian Western powers, who had taken possessions of the islands across the Atlantic and in the New World and also at home in Portugal and Spain and the countries of central Europe of the Holy Roman Empire under the spiritual domain of the Roman Catholic Popes.

The horrors of the slave trade were most pronounced during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Wherever a raid on a village took place, death and destruction followed. Many more people died defending their homes and families, or as a result of the starvation and disease which usually followed such violence, than were ever actually enslaved, let alone sold at the coast.

One shudders to think of the most diabolical ways in which the poor natives of Africa were captured, separated from their kith and kin, carried away and treated as worse than animals. We shall now give a short account from the books of Western authors themselves on how the

slaves were treated and what cruel methods were employed by the slave hunters. Their methods were at once crude and wasteful, because they were robbers, not warriors. "Their practice was to surround some villages which they have marked down for their prey, and approach it silently at night. The village was usually a collection of primitive mud huts thatched with bamboo's and palm leaves, all highly inflammable, which they set alight without compunction, generally at dawn. As the inhabitants woke to the cracking of flames and struggled into the open, they were rounded up and made prisoners. Any of them who resisted were cut down, as the slave hunters had no mercy for them. They had no use for the old or infirm or for babes who were all killed on the spot, and only men and women in their prime, and young boys and girls, were spared, to be carried off into slavery, leaving behind the dead bodies and dying ashes, where once there had been happy homes and flourishing settlements. The waste was out of all proportion to the prize. But waste, wanton waste, was the hall-mark of the negro slavery, from its first moments to the last. Wherever it reared its head, death, disease and destruction were its invariable concomitants...

"Those captured far inland were less fortunate, for they had to march to the coast on their feet - a dreary trudge over many miles of thick forest and rough desert. They walked almost naked, with no protection against sharp thorns, and jagged stones. To prevent escape, they had heavy forked poles fastened round their necks; their hands, if they were troublesome, might be secured through holes in a rough wooden board, and they were fettered with chains on their ankles. Linked together by ropes, the long lines known as coffles, they trudged miserably on towards their terrifying fate; for all Africans knew that the white were fed on the negroes bought from the barracoons. Their captors drove them relentlessly forward, ignoring wounds and lacerations, and physicking their energy by plentiful flicks of the whips. If any succumbed, he was thrown on one side; if any of them became too ill, they were left to die or more mercifully knocked on the head."[20]

"...In fair weather or foul, in spite of diseases and deaths, and for all the insurrections and suicides, every year the ships brought thousands of slaves to America and the West Indies.. They came in ships of many nations - French, Dutch, Portuguese and Danish - but more than half were brought in English ships that sailed from Bristol, London, or Liverpool. Year in and year out, they were set ashore diseased or whole, resigned or despairing and were lost for ever to the land of their birth... The uses of servitude, like its abuses, never change; they were the same all the world over and from one age to another. In America and the West Indies, as in ancient Rome, or in Greece or the dim beginnings of history, slavery was divided into two broad types - domestic slavery and the slavery of the works and plantations."[21]

Let us now give some more extracts from the same book *Freedom from Fear or the Slave and his Emancipation* by O. A. Sherrard, to show how and to what degree the foremost Christian nations of the West meted out the most inhuman treatment to the defenceless Negroes. The reader would also see their debased beliefs and notions about human beings who differed from them in colour and race.

"From the broad historical outlook, they had passed through two stages: in the first bearing on their shoulders, like a patient Atlas, the glories of many long dead civilizations; and in the second, more wretched than the first, losing even that vicarious honour, and failing to an abject state in which they contributed solely to private greed. Their condition, specially in their second phase, should have scared the conscience of a nominally Christian world, but left it peculiarly unmoved. The idea of slavery was so deeply ingrained that no one questioned its propriety. All nations either endured or enjoyed it."[22]

"The lot of plantation slave was really very hard. The job assigned to him was, from his point of view, skilled; he was to cultivate a crop unknown to him - for the most part sugar in the West Indies, cotton or tobacco in America - and, in that his work was novel, he endured a heavier burden than his counterpart in Greece or Rome or among the serfs of Europe.. All was new and strange to him; he had, therefore, to be broken in; he had to be taught his new duties; he had to be seasoned' as the saying was. 'Seasoning' was a euphemism for a harsh discipline, which was reckoned by the opponents of slavery to carry off not less than twenty per cent of those who underwent it. May be that was over the mark, but it must nonetheless be admitted that large numbers died. The discipline was painful, and there was little to ameliorate and much to embitter its seventy.[23]

The slaves had to pass through terrible stages of suffering. The cumulative effect of all the hardships was disastrous. To quote Sherrard again, "this was particularly true of the 'seasoning', for beyond doubt a large proportion of those who died under its discipline would have died in any event from the effects of the middle passage. Experience showed that the greater number of those who were weak or emaciated on arrival, died soon afterwards whatever they did. The medical authorities put this down to 'long confinement in slave-houses previous to embarkation, want of cleanliness and ventilation while on hoard the slave-ships, alterations in dress, food and habits, and, not the least, change of climate' (Buxton, p. 188). But they agreed that there was something more - a psychological or spiritual malaise, which they described, perhaps a little portentously, as 'the sad recollection of kindred and friendship, the rude violation of all the sacred and social endearments of country and relationship, and the degrading anticipation of endless unmitigated bondage.' This when add to the physical hardships too often dissolved the will to live, and the slave seized the first chance to do away with himself, or more simply, pined away and died." There were at least five types of owners and five forms of negro slavery - Spanish, French, Dutch, Danish and British - without counting America, which at the outset was British. The Americans, in the U.S.A, are even now, in the twentieth century, flouting their own laws and the Negro has not yet succeeded in securing full rights of citizenship, and there are problems for the Negro in his own home-land as the world knows too well.

The terrible fate of plantation slave is notorious - how he was branded with hot irons, how he was forced to work heavy chains, his back was torn and scarred with the lash, how at night he was locked in a prison, the ergastulum, often underground and always filthy. "The Portuguese

built a series of forts or barracoons as they came to be called, on the Guinea coast, where wretched Africans could be rounded up and kept safe till the numbers were sufficient to justify transhipment to Spain, to slavery...and eventually to America and the New World... their souls were doomed to eternal perdition; their bodies were the property of the Christian nation who should occupy their soil."[24]

The author describes how slavery was introduced into England's colonies in America: "A Dutch ship was entering the James River in Virginia and landing twenty Negroes for sale. The colonists promptly bought them and thus Negro slavery was introduced into England's American colonies." In a short time, "England acquired the first place in the coveted traffic in slaves, a position which she held for over ninety years."

"The slaves were sold at auctions, being bought in stark naked, men and women, alike, and mounted on a chair, where the bidders handled and prodded them and felt their muscles and examined their teeth and made them jump and flex their arms, to satisfy themselves that they were not bidding for a diseased or disabled lot. As the slaves were bought single, it followed that often husband and wife, children and parents went to different owners; and the loss of kith and kin and all that the slaves held dear was added to the loss of liberty. So the slave left the auction room, bereaved of everything, to begin a new life of 'abject, hopeless and crushing servitude'."[25]

Notes:

[20]. Sherrard, B.A., *Freedom from Fear* (London, 1959) pp. 61-62.

[21]. *Ibid*, pp. 67f.

[22]. *Ibid*, p.11.

[23]. *Ibid,* p. 69.

[24]. *Ibid,* p. 26.

[25] *Ibid*, p. 67.

Churches Participate in Slave-Trade

What was the attitude of the Christian church towards the Negro slave trade? From its inception, Christianity kept its eyes closed to the plight of the slaves. As mentioned earlier, the only reference to the slavery is found in the epistle of St. Paul returning a slave to Philemon to his master. That is all. Ameer Ali rightly comments that Christianity "found slavery a recognised institution of the empire; it adopted the system without any endeavour to mitigate its baneful character, or promote its gradual abolition, or to improve the status of slaves."[26]

To recognise the part played by the Christian churches in the slave trade one should read again the words of Mr. Alpers who writes, *inter alia,* that the Christians "were aware that to sell their fellow human beings could not be morally justified. Yet the Christian church came forward with excuses for the slave-trade. Many priests themselves carried on slave-trading, especially in Angola, and many others owned slaves in the Americas. The only reason the Catholic church give for its action was that it was trying to save African souls by baptising the slaves. The Protestants were worse, for they did not even make it clear that they accepted that the Africans had a soul. Instead, they supported the view that the African slave was a piece of property like a furniture or a domestic animal. There is no part of the history of Christian church which was more disgraceful than its support of the Atlantic slave-trade."[27]

The arguments of James Boswell have already been quoted where he emphasises that slavery was an institution sanctioned in all ages by God and that to abolish slavery would be to shut the gate of mercy on mankind!

Now I quote from *Capitalism and Slavery* of Dr. Eric Williams, who was a recognised historian and was also the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. He writes, "The Church also supported the slave trade. The Spaniards saw in it an opportunity of converting the heathen, and the Jesuits, Dominicans and Franciscans were heavily involved in sugar cultivation which meant slave-holding. The story is told of an elder of the Church in Newport who would invariably, the Sunday following the arrival of slaves from the coast, thank God that 'another cargo of benighted beings had been brought to land where they could have the benefit of a gospel dispensation.' But in general the British planters opposed Christianity for their slaves. It made them more perverse and intractable and therefore less valuable. It meant also instruction in the English language, which allowed diverse tribes to get together and plot sedition.. .The governor of Barbados in 1695 attributed it to the planters' refusal to give the slave Sundays and feast days off, and as late as 1832 British public opinion was shocked by the planters' rejection of a proposal to give the Negroes one day in the week in order to permit the abolition of the Negro Sunday market. The Church obediently toed the line. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel prohibited Christian instruction to its slaves in Barbados, and branded 'Society' on its new slaves to distinguish them from those of the laity; the original slaves were the legacy of the Christopher

Codrington. Sherlock, later Bishop of London, assured the planters that 'Christianity and the embracing of the Gospel does not make the least difference in civil property.' Neither did it impose any barriers to clerical activity. For his labours with regards to the Asiento which he helped to draw up as a British plenipotentiary at Utrecht, Bishop Robinson of Bristol was promoted to see of London. The bell of the Bristol churches pealed merrily on the news of the rejection of Parliament of Wilberforce's bill for the abolition of the slave-trade. The slave trader, John Newton, gave thanks to the Liverpool churches for the success of this last venture before his conversion and implored God's blessing on his. He established public worship twice every day on his slaver, officiating himself, and kept a day of fasting and praying, not for the slaves but for crew. 'I never knew', he confessed, 'sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than in the last two voyages to Guinea.' The famous Cardinal Manning of the nineteenth century was the son of a rich West Indian merchant dealing in slave-grown produce. Many missionaries found it profitable to drive out Beelzebub by Beelzebub. According to the most recent English writer on the slave trade, they 'considered that the best way in which to remedy abuse of Negro slaves was to set the plantation owner a good example by keeping slaves and estates themselves, accomplishing in this practical manner the salvation of the planters and the advancement of their foundations'. The Moravian missionaries on the island held slaves without hesitation; the Baptists, one historian writes with charming delicacy, would not allow their earlier missionaries to deprecate ownership of slaves. To the very end the Bishop of Exeter retained his 655 slaves, for whom he received over 12,700 pounds compensation in 1833.

"Church historians make awkward apologies, that conscience awoke very slowly to the appreciation of the wrongs inflicted by slavery and that the defence of slavery by churchmen 'simply arose from want of delicacy of moral perception'. There is no need to make such apologies. The attitude of the churchmen was the attitude of the layman. The eighteenth century, like any other century, could not rise above its economic limitations. As Whitefield argued in advocating the repeal of that article of the Georgia charter which forbade slavery, 'It is plain to demonstration that hot countries cannot be cultivated without Negroes.'.

"Quaker nonconformity did not extend to the slave trade. In 1756 there were eighty-four Quakers listed as members of the Company trading to Africa, among them the Barclay and the Baring families. Slave dealing was one of the most lucrative investments of English as of American Quakers, and the name of slaver, The Willing Quaker, reported from Boston at Sierra Leone in 1793, symbolizes the approval with which the slave trade was regarded in Quaker circles. The Quaker opposition to the slave trade came first and largely not from England but from America, and there from the small rural communities of the North, independent of slave labour. 'It is difficult', writes Dr. Gray, 'to avoid the assumption that opposition to the slave system was at the first confined to a group who gained no direct advantage from it, and consequently possessed an objective attitude.'...

"Slavery existed under the very eyes of eighteenth century Englishmen. And English coin, the guinea, rare though it was and is, had its origin in the trade of Africa. A Westminster goldsmith made silver padlocks for blacks and dogs. Busts of blackamoors and elephants, emblematical of the slave trade adorned the Liverpool Town Hall. The insignia and equipment of the slave traders were boldly exhibited for sale in the shops and advertised in the press. Slaves were sold openly at auction. Slaves being invaluable property, with title recognised by law, the postmaster was the agent employed on occasions to recapture runaway slaves and advertisements were published in the official organ of the government. Negro servants were common. Little black boys were the appendages of slave captains, fashionable ladies or women of the easy virtue. Hogarth's heroine, 'The Harlots Progress' is attended by a Negro boy, and Marguerito Steen's Orabella Burmester typifies eighteenth century English opinion in her desire for little black boy whom she could love

as her long-haired kitten. Freed Negroes were conspicuous among London beggars and were known as St. Giles blackbirds. So numerous were they that a parliamentary committee was set up in 1786 for relieving the black poor.

"'Slaves cannot breath in England,' wrote the poet Cowper. This was licence of the poet. It was held in 1677 that 'Negroes being usually bought and sold among merchants, so merchandise, and also being infidels, there might be a property in them'. In 1729 the Attorney General ruled that baptism did not bestow freedom or make any alteration in the temporal condition of slave; in addition the slave did not become free by being brought to England, and once in England the owner could legally compel his return to the plantations. So eminent an authority as Sir William Blackstone held that 'with respect to any right the master may have lawfully acquired to the perpetual service of John or Thomas, will remain exactly in the same state of subjection for the life,' in England or elsewhere."[28]

When ships loaded with human cargo sailed from Christian countries to Western hemisphere, Christian priests used to bless the ship in the name of Almighty and admonish the slaves to be obedient. It never entered into their minds to admonish the masters to be kind to the slaves.

It is hard to believe but it seems that the Roman Catholics think it quite in keeping with the teachings of their church to obtain slaves even in this era of 1970s. In August 1970 the world was shocked to hear that the Roman Catholics had purchased, at the price ranging from 250 pounds to 300 pounds each, about 1500 Indian girls to shut them into convents because European girls do not like to live as nuns.[29] There was so much outcry in the world press that the Vatican had to establish a commission to enquire into this affair. But even before the commission started its enquire, a Vatican spokesman had to admit that there was an "element of truth" in the reports, though he dutifully condemned the *Sunday Times* for its sensation-mongering.

Notes:

[26]. Ameer 'Ali, *Spirit of Islam* (London: University Paper-backs, 1965) p. 260.

[27]. Alpers, *op. cit.,* p. 22.

[28]. Williams, *op. cit.,* pp. 42-5.

[29]. *Sunday Times* (London) as quoted in *East African Standard* (Nairobi), August 25, 1970.

Why Slavery Was Abolished

Someone may point out: Was it not the Christian Britain which finally abolished the slavery?

Well, if someone practices tyranny isn't he the one who has to give up that practice? As already explained, Britain was the biggest slave-trader; and when economic forces compelled her to abolish slave-trade she did so. But does she or Christianity deserve any thanks for it? Should not we thank the economic forces behind that move?

The fact is that the movement against slavery was not spear-headed by Churches; it was led by a handful of moralists whose cries remained unheeded till the economic necessity compelled the Parliament to pass a bill in 1807 against slave-trade. After 26 years, another bill was passed to abolish slavery itself in British-held countries in 1833. As Professor D. W. Brogan writes in the introduction of Dr. Eric Williams' magnificent book *Capitalism and Slavery,* "the abolition of the slave-trade, then the abolition of the slavery, were not merely the results of a rising standard of political ethics in Britain (although Dr. Williams does not dismiss as unimportant the work of men like Clarkson) but were a form of cutting of losses. The West Indies sugar monopoly became intolerable to a booming industrial society, rightly confident in its invulnerable competitive position in the early days of the industrial revolution." To summarise, in the words of Prof. Brogan, the slave system was "tolerated, defended, praised as long as it was profitable."

"It was highly profitable and for a long time. On the profits of the West Indies plantations were based the fortune of Bristol and Liverpool and to some extent, of Glasgow. The West Indian planter was the rival in ostentation of the East Indian nabob.. It was in vain for moralists to point out that every brick of the great warehouses of Bristol and Liverpool was cemented in Negro blood.. But the voice of the moralists was seldom overheard amid the chink of guineas (the very name recalls the triangular trade between Britain, Africa and the transatlantic colonies)."

What the "triangular trade" meant? From England, sundry assortment "typical of the slave trader's cargo" was taken to Africa: "Finery for Africans, household utensils, cloths of all kinds, iron and other metals, together with guns, hand-cuffs and fetters." From Africa human cargo was taken to West Indies and Americas. From West Indies and other colonies sugar,

tobacco, indigo, cotton, coffee and other raw materials were taken to the mother country (i.e., England) where they were processed and then re-imported.[1]

The plantations were founded on slavery and were protected by monopolies. Then came the secession of 13 colonies of America which closed a big market against the British held West Indies. Its another effect was that the now independent U.S.A. turned towards French held Islands of Saint Domingue (Haiti), Cuba and Brazil. Dr. Williams writes, "The superiority of the French sugar colonies was for the British planters the chief among the many ills which flew out of the Pandora's box that was the American Revolution. Between 1783 and 1789 the progress of the French sugar islands, of Saint Domingue especially, was the most amazing phenomenon in colonial development. The fertility of the French soil was decisive, French sugar cost one-fifth less than Britain, the average yield in Saint Domingue and Jamaica was five to one."[2]

The disastrous effect upon British West Indies may be judged by the fact that "in 1775 Jamaica had 775 plantations; by 1791, out of every hundred, twenty three had been sold for debt, twelve were in the hands of receivers, while seven had been abandoned; and the West Indian planters, indebted to the enormous sum of twenty millions." Gradually, British planters irretrievably lost that ascendancy which they had so long enjoyed in the European Market. "French colonial exports, over eight million pounds, and imports, over four millions, employed 164,000 tons of shipping and 33,000 sailors; British colonial exports, five million pounds, and imports, less than two millions, employed 148,000 tons of shipping and 14,000 seamen. In every respect the sugar colonies had become vastly more essential to France than they were to England."[3]

Thus the cost of sugar (and likewise of all such products) was becoming too high. Dr. Williams explains, "The West Indian monopoly was not only unsound in theory, it was unprofitable in practice. In 1828 it was estimated that it cost the British people annually more than one and a half million pounds. In 1844 it was costing the country 70,000 pounds a week and London 6,000 pounds. England was paying for its sugar five millions more a year than the Continent...Two-fifths of the price of every pound of sugar consumed in England represented the cost of production, two-fifths went in revenue to the government, one-fifth in tribute to the West Indian planter.."[4]

Gradually, Saint Domingue (Haiti) held by France emerged as the most important sugar producer. From the standpoint of the British Prime Minister, William Pitt, this was the decisive factor. The age of the British sugar islands was over. The West Indian system was unprofitable, and the slave-trade on which it rested, "instead of being very advantageous to Great Britain...is the most destructive that can well be imagined by interests.[5] Therefore, Pitt turned to India to cultivate and produce sugar. "Pill's plan was twofold: to recapture the European market with the aid of sugar from India, and to secure an international abolition of the slave-trade which would ruin Saint Domingue. If not international abolition, then British

abolition. The French were so dependent on British slave traders that even a unilateral abolition by England would seriously dislocate the economy of the French colonies.

"Pitt's plan failed for two reasons. The importation of East India sugar, on the scale planned, was impossible owing to the high duties imposed on all sugar not the produce of the British West Indies.. Secondly, the French, Dutch and Spaniards refused.. to abolish the slave-trade. It was not difficult to see the political motives behind Pitt's cloak of humanitarianism. Gaston-Martin, the well-known French historian of the slave-trade and the Caribbean colonies, accuses Pitt of aiming by propaganda to free the slaves 'in the name no doubt of humanity, but also to ruin French commerce.' and concludes that in this philanthropic propaganda there were economic motives.

Then occurred a unique episode. The French planters of Saint Domingue, in 1791, fearful of the consequences of French Revolution offered the islands to England; soon Windward Island followed suit; Pitt accepted the offer in 1793. Expedition after expedition was sent, unsuccessfully, to capture the island.

Dr. Williams comments: "This is of more than academic interest. Pitt could not have had Saint Domingue and abolition as well. Without its 40,000 slave imports a year, Saint Domingue might as well have been at the bottom of the sea. The very acceptance of the island meant logically the end of Pitt's interest in abolition. Naturally he did not say so. He had already committed himself too far in the eyes of the public. He continued to speak in favour of abolition, even while giving every practical encouragement to the slave trade...Pitt's reasons were political and only secondarily personal. He was interested in the sugar trade. Either he must ruin Saint Domingue by flooding Europe with cheaper Indian sugar or by abolishing the slave-trade; or he must get Saint Domingue for himself."[7]

"It would give Britain a monopoly of sugar, indigo, cotton and coffee... But if Pitt captured Saint Domingue, the slave-trade must continue. When Saint Domingue was lost to France, the slave-trade became merely a humanitarian question...

"But the ruin of Saint Domingue did not mean the salvation of the British West Indies. Two new enemies appeared on the scene. Cuba forged ahead to fill the gap left in the world market by the disappearance of Saint Domingue."[8]

"Whilst, under the American flag, Cuban and other neutral sugar still found a market in Europe, British West Indian surpluses piled up in England. Bankruptcies were the order of the day. Between 1799 and in 1807, 65 plantations in Jamaica were abandoned, 32 were sold for debts, and 1807 suits were pending against 115 others. Debt, disease and death were the only topics of conversation in the island. A parliamentary committee set up in 1807 discovered that the British West Indian planter was producing at a loss. In 1800 his profit was 2 1/2 per cent, in 1807 nothing. In 1787 the planter got 19/6d profit per hundredweight; in 1799, 10/9d; in

1803, 18/6d; 1805, 12/-; in 1809, nothing. The committee attributed the main evil to the unfavourable state of foreign market. In 1806 the surplus of sugar in England amounted to six thousand tons. Production had to be curtailed. To restrict production, the slave-trade must be abolished."[9]

Thus, in the words of Dr. Williams, "abolition was the direct result of that (economic) distress."[10]

Notes:

[1]. Williams, Dr. Eric, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 65.

[2]. *Ibid,* p. 122.

[3]. *Ibid,* p. 123.

[4]. *Ibid,* p. 138-9.

[5]. *Ibid*, p. 146.

[6]. *Ibid,* p. 146-7.

[7]. *Ibid,* p. 147-8.

[8]. *Ibid,* p. 148-9.

[9]. *Ibid,* p. 149.

[10]. *Ibid,* p. 150.

Hypocricy Of The Abolitionists

If anybody wishfully thinks that the main cause of the abolition of slavery was moral and ethical development, he would be well-advised to look at the attitude of abolitionists within the frame work of their economic aims.

Thus we see that the same West Indian interest holders who before the previously mentioned distress were the ardent supporters of slave-trade now became enthusiastic "humanists". Dr. Williams says, "Ironically enough, it was the former slave owners of the West Indies who now held the humanitarian torch. Those who, in 1807, were lugubriously prophesying that abolition of the British slave-trade would 'occasion diminished commerce, diminished revenue and diminished navigation; and in the end sap and totally remove the great cornerstone of British prosperity,' were, after 1807, the very men who protested against 'a system of man-stealing against a poor and inoffensive people."' The West India interest in 1830 put a resolution "to adopt more decisive measures...*to stop the foreign slave-trade; on the effectual suppression of which the prosperity of the British West Indian colonies... ultimately depends.* Jamaican envoys, sent to Britain in 1823, declared that 'the colonies were easily reconciled to the abolition of a barbarous commerce, which the advanced civilization of the age no longer permitted to exist' ...A great mass movement for abolition of the slave-trade developed in Jamaica in 1849. Auj claplo, parties and sects were united on the question of justice to Africa. They denounced the slave-trade and slavery as 'opposed to humanity - productive of the worst evils to Africa - degrading to all engaged in the traffic, and inimical to the moral and spiritual interests of the enslaved,' and pleaded that 'the odious term "slave" be expunged from the vocabulary of universe. *SLAVERY MUST FALL, and, when it falls, JAMAICA WILL FLOURISH.'* England, they declared pointedly, had gone to wars for less justifiable causes."[11]

And what was the worth of all such high-sounding phrases may be judged from the fact that the British capitalism, even after destroying West Indian slavery, "continued to thrive on Brazilian, Cuban and American slavery." So, in the words of Professor Brogan, "we get the paradoxes of the reversal of roles. It was all very well for the abolitionists to deplore the use of slave-produced sugar in the West Indies, but no one proposed to stop the use of the slave-produced cotton from the United States. Indeed, no one proposed seriously to stop the use of the slave-produced sugar from Brazil or Cuba. Money not passion, passion of wickedness or

goodness, spun the plot".

Dr. Williams writes, "After India, Brazil and Cuba, by no stretch of imagination could any humanitarian justify any proposal calculated to revet the chains of slavery still more firmly on the Negroes of Brazil and Cuba. That was precisely what free trade in sugar meant. For after 1807 the British West Indians were denied the slave-trade and after 1833 slave labour. If the abolitionists had recommended Indian sugar, incorrectly, on the humanitarian principle that it was free-grown, it was their duty to their principles and their religion to boycott the slave-grown sugar of Brazil and Cuba. In falling to do this it is not to be inferred that they were wrong, but it is undeniable that their failure to adopt such a course completely destroys the humanitarian argument. The abolitionists, after 1833, continued to oppose the West Indian planter who now employed free labour. Where, before 1833, they had boycotted the British slave-owner, after 1833 they espoused the cause of the Brazilian slave-owner."[12]

"The barbarous removal of the Negroes from Africa continued for at least twenty five years after 1833, to the sugar plantations of Brazil and Cuba. Brazilian and Cuban economy depended on the slave-trade. Consistency alone demanded that the British abolitionists oppose this trade. But that would retard Brazilian and Cuban development and consequently hamper British trade. The desire for cheap sugar after 1833 overcame all abhorrence of slavery. Gone was the horror which once was excited at the idea of a British West Indian slave-driver armed with whip; the Cuban slave-driver armed with a whip, cutlass, dagger and pistols, and followed by bloodhounds, aroused not even comment from the abolitionists."[13]

Thus it is clear that the real reasons of the British humanitarianism was not so much moral uprightness or ethical awakening but the economic pressure and to harm their business competitors. In the words of Professor Brogan, the lesson of Capitalism and Slavery is chilling if not new:

"Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

Notes:

[11]. *Ibid,* p. 175-6.

[12]. *Ibid,* p. 188.

[13]. *Ibid,* p. 192.

Was American Civil War
To Emancipate The Slaves

I think it is in the interest of the readers to critically review the story that the American Civil War was fought to emancipate the slaves. It is a myth, having no relation with reality. I propose to quote here from chapter 22 of *Lincoln, the Unknown* written by the famous author Dale Carnegie.[14] He begins with these words:-

"Ask the average American citizen today why the Civil War was fought, and the chances are that he will reply, 'To free the slaves'.

"Was it?"

"Let's see. Here is a sentence taken from Lincoln's first inaugural address: 'I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it now exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.'

"The fact is that the cannon had been booming and the wounded groaning for almost eighteen months before Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. During all that time the Radicals and the Abolitionists had urged him to act at once, storming at him through the press and denouncing him from the public platforms.

"Once a delegation of Chicago ministers appeared at the White House with what they declared was a direct command from Almighty God to free the slaves immediately. Lincoln told them that he imagined that if the Almighty had any advice to offer He would come direct to headquarters with it, instead of sending it around via Chicago."

Further on, Dale Carnegie quotes from Lincoln's reply to Greedy's article 'The Prayer of Twenty Million':

"My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving the

others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the coloured race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union, and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more whenever I believe doing more will help the cause."

To explain that reply, Dale Carnegie writes:

"Four slave States had remained with the North, and Lincoln realised that if he issued his Emancipation Proclamation too early in the conflict he would drive them into the Confederacy, strengthen the South, and perhaps destroy the Union for ever. There was a saying at the time that Lincoln would like to have God Almighty on his side, but he must have Kentucky.

"So he bided his time, and moved cautiously.

"He himself had married into a slave-owing, border State family. Part of the money that his wife received from the settlement of her father's estate had come from the sale of slaves. And the only really intimate friend that he ever had, Joshua Speed was a member of a slave-owning family. Lincoln sympathised with the Southern point of view. Besides, he had the attorney's traditional respect for the Constitution and for law and property. He wanted to work no hardship on any one.

"He believed that the North was much to blame for the existence of slavery in the United States as was the South; and that in getting rid of it, both sections should bear the burden equally. So he finally worked out a plan that was very near to his heart. According to this, the slave-owners in the loyal border States were to receive four hundred dollars for each of their Negroes. The slaves were to be emancipated gradually, very gradually. The process was not to be entirely completed until January 1, 1900. Calling the representatives of the border States to the White House, he pleaded with them to accept his proposal.

"The change it contemplates, Lincoln argued, would come gently as the dews of heaven, not rending or wrecking anything. Will you not embrace it? So much good has not been done, by one effort, in all past time; as in the providence of God' it is now your high privilege to do. May the vast future not have to lament that you have neglected it."

The reader would remember that this plan of emancipation "that was very near his Lincoln's heart" was the same which had already been effected and practised 1300 years ago in Islam and which had produced wonderful results in the Islamic world. Had that plan been accepted by Lincoln's compatriots, there would not have been so much racial hatred, internal strife, social upheaval and emotional instability which is still persisting in the USA a century after the so called "emancipation of Negroes" there.

Unfortunately, the representatives of those border-states rejected that plan. Carnegie says, "Lincoln was immediately disappointed. I must save this Government, if possible, he said, and it may as well be understood, once for all, that I shall not surrender this game, leaving any available card unplayed... I believe that freeing the slaves and arming the blacks has now become an indispensable military necessity. I have been driven to the alternative of either doing that or surrendering the Union.

"He had to act at once, for both France and England were on the verge of recognising the Confederacy. Why? The reasons were very simple. Take France's case first."

Napoleon III was on the throne of France. "He longed to cover himself with glory, as his renowned uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte, had done. So when he saw the States slashing and shooting at one another, and knew they were much too occupied to bother about enforcing the Monroe Doctrine, he ordered an army to Mexico, shot a few thousand natives, conquered the country, called Mexico a French empire, and put the Archduke Maximilian on the throne.

"Napoleon believed, and not without reason, that if the Confederates won they would favour his new empire; but that if the Federals won, the United States would immediately take steps to put the French out of Mexico. It was Napoleon's wish, therefore, that the South would make good its secession, and he wanted to help it as much as he conveniently could.

"At the outset of the war, the Northern navy closed all Southern ports, guarded 189 harbours and patrolled 9,614 miles of coast-line, sounds, bayous and rivers. It was the most gigantic blockade the world had ever seen. The Confederates were desperate. They couldn't sell their cotton; neither could they buy guns, ammunition, shoes, medical supplies, or food. They boiled chestnuts and cotton-seed to make a substitute for coffee, and brewed a decoction of blackberry leaves and sassafras roots to take the place of tea. Newspapers were printed on wall-paper. The ear-then floors of smoke-houses, saturated with the drippings of bacon, were dug up and boiled to get salt. Church bells were melted and cast into cannon. Street-car rails in Richmond were torn up to be made into gunboat armour.

"The Confederates couldn't repair their rail-roads or buy new equipment, so transportation was almost at a standstill; corn that could be purchased for two dollars a bushel in Georgia, brought fifteen dollars in Richmond. People in Virginia were going hungry.

"Something had to be done at once. So the South offered to give Napoleon III twelve million dollars worth of cotton if he would recognise the Confederacy and use the French fleet to lift the blockade. Besides, they promised to overwhelm him with orders that would start smoke rolling out of every factory chimney in France night and day.

"Napoleon therefore urged Russia and England to join him in recognising the Confederacy. The aristocracy that ruled England adjusted their monocles, poured a few drinks of Scotch

Whisky, and listened eagerly to Napoleon's overtures. The United States was getting too rich and powerful to please them. They wanted to see the nation divided, the Union broken. Besides, they needed the South's cotton. Scores of England's factories had closed, and a million people were not only idle but destitute and reduced to actual pauperism.

Children were crying for food, hundreds of people were dying of starvation. Public subscriptions to buy food for British workmen were taken up in the remotest corners of the earth: even in far off India and poverty-stricken China. There was one way, and only one way, that England could get cotton, and that was to join Napoleon III in recognising the Confederacy and lifting the blockade.

"If that were done, what would happen in America? The South would get guns, powder, credit, food, railway equipment, and a tremendous lift in confidence and morale.

"And what would the North get? Two new and powerful enemies. The situation, bad enough now, would be hopeless then.

"Nobody knew this better than Abraham Lincoln. 'We have about played our last card,' he confessed in 1862. 'We must either change our tactics now or lose the game.'

"As England saw it, all the colonies had originally seceded from her. Now the Southern colonies had, in turn, seceded from the Northern ones; and the North was fighting to coerce and subdue them. What difference did it make to a peer in London or a prince in Paris whether Tennessee and Texas were ruled from Washington or Richmond? None. To them, the fighting was meaningless and fraught with no high purpose.

"'No war ever raging in my times,' wrote Carlyle, 'was to be more profoundly foolish looking.'

"Lincoln saw that Europe's attitude towards the war must be changed, and he knew how to do it. A million people in Europe had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* - had read it and wept and learned to abhor the heartaches and injustice of slavery. So Abraham Lincoln knew that if he issued his Proclamation of Emancipation, Europeans would see the war in a different light. It would no longer be a bloody quarrel over the preservation of a Union that meant nothing to them. Instead, it would be exalted into a holy crusade to destroy slavery. European Governments would then not dare to recognise the South. Public opinion wouldn't tolerate the aiding of a people supposed to be fighting to perpetuate human bondage.

"Finally, therefore, in July 1862 Lincoln determined to issue his proclamation, but McClellan and Pope had recently led the army to humiliating defeats. Seward told the President that the time was not auspicious, that he ought to wait and launch the proclamation on the crest of a wave of victory.

"That sounded sensible. So Lincoln waited; and two months later the victory came."

And so, to further the cause of Union War, the Proclamation of Emancipation was published in September 1862, which was to be effective on 1st January, 1863.

I have highest respect for Abraham Lincoln and he has been one of my favourite heroes since childhood. But that respect is based upon the facts and reality; not upon myths. He was a humanitarian and he, from the depth of heart, was against slavery. But it does not mean that we should glorify him by false propaganda. The reality was that he did not fight civil war to emancipate the slaves; rather he emancipated the slaves to win the civil war and save the Union.

Notes:

[14]. Carnegie, Dale, *Lincoln: the Unknown* (Surrey, U.K.:The Word Work Ltd, 1948) chp. 22.

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Territorial Slavery

Up to now we have discussed one type of slavery, i.e., household slavery. But it was mentioned in chapter one that slavery is of two kinds, the second being the Territorial Slavery or subjugation of one nation by another.

Though the household slavery is now supposed to he abolished, the territorial slavery is still very much alive. With a heart full of sorrow one notes the systematic destruction of human lives and human dignity perpetuated by the Christian civilization in almost all parts of the world.

Red Indians were the original inhabitants of the New World. Where are they now? They were gradually pushed out from their own lands and have been forced to live in less fertile rather unproductive patches of U.S.A. Aborigines of Australia were subjected to the same treatment. Red Indians and Aborigines both were hunted like buffaloes and now their number is nearing the extinction point. Dr. Eric Williams quotes a story of the Indian chieftain, Hatuey, who doomed to die for resisting the invaders, staunchly refused to accept the Christian faith as the gateway to salvation when he learned that his executioners, too, hope to get to Heaven.[1]

Even more tragic is the fate of the Africans in Southern Africa. Portuguese, armed with the Pope's decree to "reduce the infidels to servitude" are tenaciously keeping Angola and Mozambique under the yoke of Territorial Slavery.

It is really astonishing to note that Pope Paul VI often issues statements on political problems of the world; but has never seen it fit to advise Portugal to negotiate with its "subjects" in Africa and elsewhere. Instead the Popes have maintained special relations with Portugal and Spain, the two Roman Catholic nations which stubbornly refuse to free their African colonies. In July 1970, Pope Paul VI received some leaders of freedom fighters of Portuguese African colonies. This audience infuriated Portugal, which issued a protest; Vatican nervously issued an explanation. Commenting upon it, the following letter entitled "Pope's Note A Comfort" was published in the *Standard* Dar es-salaam (Tanzania), by 'A Black Roman Catholic':

"The news item 'Pope's note comforts Portugal' (*Standard*, July 11) refers. I quote the relevant sentences:

> A Vatican note.. .said that Pope had received them (i.e., the leaders of liberation movements of Africa under Portuguese rule) as Catholics and Christians, without reference to their political functions. He reminded them to the Church's teaching that peaceful means should always be used even in seeking what one considers to be one's right.

"The earlier news that the Holy Father had received the said leaders had perturbed me much. Now this clarification has put my anxiety to rest. Let me explain why. It was the Roman Catholic Church which established Western colonialism by dividing all the newly discovered lands and countries into two halves: giving the Spaniards the Western half (like Americas), and granting Portugal the Eastern half (like Africa and India).

"Portugal's colonies in Africa are firmly founded on that important Papal decree. When I read earlier that Pope Paul VI had received the leaders of the Liberation movements, I was surprised how was it possible. According to our beliefs of the Papal infallibility, Pope Paul VI is bound to carry on and justify whatever was decreed by his Holy predecessors. Therefore, according to my thinking he should not have encouraged those leaders.

"Now his clarification has comforted me a lot spiritually. Now I may sleep in peace with a sure knowledge that my Church has not condemned itself by implying that previous Popes were wrong in establishing and supporting the 'enlightenment' of this black continent under Portuguese Imperialism.

"Also, his advice to these so called 'victims of colonialism' to remain peaceful (i.e., to disband freedom-fighter units and beg Portugal to grant them Uhuru) is the same old wine in a new bottle. It reminds me of the invocations of priests of the Roman Catholic Church at the time of sailings of the slave-ships from Portuguese ports for West Indies. They always prayed to the Almighty to ensure the safety of the ships and always admonished the black slaves to behave gently and obediently. Of course, they did not think it necessary to advise the masters of the slaves to think of them as human beings. I am glad that my Church has not changed during all these long centuries."

South Africa's policy of Apartheid is universally condemned by UNO and elsewhere. But the Churches had always toed the line. It is only after the "change of wind" in Africa and rapid emergence of independent African nations that the Churches have realised the need to oppose the nefarious system which denies the original inhabitants of the country the right to work, walk, sit, ride, earn or sleep in their own land. And even when all other Churches, forced by the political necessity, have shown their opposition to this type of slavery, the Dutch Reformed Church still supports that inhuman system.

Rhodesia is following in the foot-steps of South Africa. A common African joke in these parts

of the world describes an African telling an European: "When you came, you had the Bible and we had the land. Now we have the Bible and you have the land."

Apart from this blatant subjugation, there are other disguises in which the territorial slavery shows its face. Like a chameleon, it changes its colour according to the environment. Naked colonialism has now been replaced by neo-colonialism; but it still amounts to the same subjugation of nations and peoples by the superpowers through more subtle or not so subtle methods. We have seen what happened to the League of Nations. It has been replaced by the UNO, but when the weak nations cry and appeal for justice, diplomatic pressure is exercised and their just demands for their basic rights are shelved, or postponed. There is political blackmail, and the colour of the skin is still a deciding factor. In fact the governing nations or those who are powerful and well-equipped with instruments and means of wholesale destruction and annihilation, still hold their sway.

This type of slavery is practised today not only by Christo-capitalist nations but by communists also; and it will continue so long as human society remains divided into the strong and the weak or until the existence of Omnipotent and All-powerful God is recognised and His Sovereignty over the world is fully believed in and accepted.

Even now when the 20th century is marching towards its close and the Americans pride themselves on their achievements, the "Negro" question is in the forefront and still unsolved. Despairingly, O.A. Sherrard says, "Slavery has existed from the beginning and will last in one form or another as long as men lust after power. It has resulted in more misery, more murder, more degradation, more sadness, suffering and sin than any other human institution. It crushes individuals; it blights communities; it sours all human intercourse, for its sign-manual is fear... It has dealt viciously with the past, and perhaps more viciously with the present; for in modern forms slavery if less obvious is more widespread and its fear more pervasive. The fear of a servile rising among its satellites haunts the Soviet Presidium; the fear of a servile fate heightens the tension between East and West; the fear of a servile revenge broods in South Africa and overshadows the States; the fear of servile indignities, brain-washing, torture and sudden death, cows vast multitudes throughout the world."[2]

But we do not share this pessimistic view. We realise that the problem is gigantic, but we also know that Islam is the Religion sent by Allah, the Omnipotent. Islam, 1400 years ago brought three-sided programme for eradication of slavery:

Blocking the ways of acquiring new slaves, emancipation, and restoration of the human dignity to the slaves. And the fact is that though Bani Umayyah sabotaged the first side of that programme by re-introducing slavery by purchase, they could not minimise the impact of the other two programmes. And the slaves in the Muslim world regained their lost human dignity.

A system which has shown its worth and which achieved success in fields where other

systems have utterly failed, will surely achieve the total eradication of every type of division, segregation, inequality and inequity if it is given chance. Ameer Ali writes, "It remains for the Moslems [*sic*] to show the falseness of the aspersions cast on the memory of the great and noble Prophet [by the traducers and enemies of Islam], by proclaiming in explicit terms that slavery, [bondage in any shape and the difference of race and colour are] reprobated by their faith and discountenanced by their code."[3] And we are sure that Islam will be given opportunity by Allah to establish full and complete justice in the world.

The Shi'ite Imams, the Divine Guides, carried on the work of the Holy Prophet and instilled in their followers the true spirit of Islam. They, by their own examples and through sermons, preserved the original Islam for their followers.

And the last divine Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (peace be upon him), the Awaited One, is to re-appear when this world will become full of injustice, tyranny and dishonesty. When the Awaited One comes out from Occultation, he will fill this world with complete justice, honesty and mercy. We believe in a better world and we know that whatever the disguise of slavery at the time of re-appearance of the Twelfth Imam, the Awaited One, it is bound to disappear, vacating its place to universal brotherhood and human dignity.

Notes:

[1]. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

[2]. Sherrard, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-189.

[3]. Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam,* p. 267

Postscript

The first edition of this book was published fifteen years ago. Many changes have occurred in this period on the world stage. The wind of change has blown away the Portuguese rule from Africa, giving freedom to Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. Rhodesia's black majority has overthrown Ian Smith's "independence" of the White settlers, putting Zimbabwe on Africa's map. Spain too had to withdraw from the "Spanish Sahara".

I have re-read the preceding chapter (Territorial Slavery) to see if some changes were advisable. But it seems that no alteration would be justified. The fact is that no substantial change has occurred in the overall picture. Rather the situation has gone from bad to worse - the flag independence of some countries notwithstanding.

South Africa, with whole-hearted "ethical, philosophical and scriptural" support of the Dutch Reformed Church, is relentlessly pursuing its policy of apartheid. In spite of pressures from O. A.U, Commonwealth and UNO members, the United States and the United Kingdom have stubbornly refused to impose economic sanction against South Africa. On the other hand, USA supports South Africa in its ventures to destabilise Angola and Mozambique.

The wave of Islamic awakening, with Islam's unambiguous stand against oppression of man by man, or exploitation of nation by nation, is proving a stumbling block to the oppressors of the weaker people. Not without reason, the 1986 Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church had declared that Islam was a great danger to South Africa - i.e., to the idea of racial supremacy.

With all the propaganda being made by the super powers about the Human Rights, the same powers go on unabashedly trampling the basic human rights of weaker nations. Their tentacles are strangulating the Middle East and Afghanistan, as well as Central America and Central Asia. Nor has the Vatican changed its stance *vis-à-vis* freedom movements and down-trodden masses.

Although the appearance of neo-colonialism has changed to some extent, its reality has not changed at all. It was thought better, therefore, to let the concluding chapter stand as it was.

Gopalpur, India

November 27, 1987